

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League on Tuesday finished drawing up a draft for a controversial Arab pact of honour aimed at ending divisions between Arab states after the 1990-91 Gulf war, league head Esmat Abdul Meguid said. The commission charged with drawing up the pact completed the draft "after long discussions and studies and after taking into account the remarks of interested nations," the secretary general told journalists. The draft includes "three parts: statutes and general principles, the mode of joint Arab action and mechanisms for this action," Dr. Meguid said. It also includes a formula for an Arab court of justice, a proposal which had raised opposition from several countries who feared it would infringe on their sovereignty, he said. He said that a Tunisia proposal to create an Arab conflict resolution mechanism would be considered separately at the next ministerial council session in March which is to consider the draft pledge. In their last session in September, league foreign ministers rejected an earlier draft, in which nations vow to resolve their conflicts peacefully, after deep divisions erupted over the document.

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Libya angry at Tunisia-Israeli ties

TUNIS (R) — Libya said on Tuesday it was surprised by Tunisia's decision to establish ties with Israel, describing the move by its neighbour as contradictory to the will of the Arab people. "This decision is contrary to (Libya's) position of principle... which rejects normalisation policies with the Israeli enemy in all its forms," the official Libyan news agency JANA said in a commentary. "This decision is a surprise to us," JANA said. "This decision reflects disdain for Arab and Islamic values." Tunis-based diplomats said the Libyan comment was likely to increase strain in the already fragile ties between the two countries. They recalled that Tripoli in November brought home its envoy in Mauritania in a protest against Nouakchott's decision to establish similar ties with Israel. Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, saying he was expressing the position of the Arab people by opposing the Middle East peace process, had been pressing neighbouring Tunisia since 1994 not to establish ties with Israel, they said (see related story on page 2).

King receives cable from Saudi leaders

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday received a cable from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia congratulating him on the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan. King Fahd wished His Majesty continued good health and happiness. The King also received a similar cable from Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz.

Kabariti to visit Gaza soon

AMMAN (AFP) — Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti is due to visit the autonomous Gaza Strip on Thursday or Friday, in the first such visit by a high-ranking Jordanian official since the creation of the self-rule area. "Upon directives from King Hussein, I am going to Gaza either Thursday or Friday for talks with Yasser Arafat on bilateral ties and the peace process," Mr. Kabariti told AFP on Tuesday. Mr. Kabariti hailed the "honesty" of the historic Palestinian elections. King Hussein had congratulated Mr. Arafat on his victory praising his lifelong struggle for Palestinian rights. An 11-member Jordanian team, led by former Premier Abdul Salam Majali, joined international observers in monitoring the self-rule elections. Dr. Majali met Mr. Arafat in Gaza on Monday, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

U.N., league working on Bethlehem

CAIRO (AFP) — The United Nations and the Arab League are working together on a two-million dollar project to revitalise the Biblical town of Bethlehem on the West Bank, a league official said on Tuesday. "Contacts are underway on the project between the league, the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa," whom the league nominated to oversee preparations for the project, Deputy Secretary General Said Kamal said. The project "aims to protect, renovate and revitalise the historic section of Bethlehem due to its political, economic, religious and cultural importance," Mr. Kamal said.

League may send team to Palestinians

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League will discuss sending its first ever delegation to the Palestinian self-ruled territories as a gesture of support to newly-elected President Yasser Arafat, an Arab diplomat said Tuesday. The general secretariat of the pan-Arab body will discuss at its next session on Sunday a request made by Mr. Arafat for "a high-level league mission," said the diplomat, who asked not to be named. "Interested nations, especially the United States," contacted the league to back Mr. Arafat's request, the diplomat said. The mission would congratulate Mr. Arafat on his landslide victory in presidential elections on Saturday and "provide Arab support" to him, he said.

Iran votes \$20m against 'great Satan'

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian parliament adopted Tuesday a \$20 million budget to thwart U.S. covert action against the Islamic republic and finance its own activities against the "great Satan." The budget, bumped up from the \$16 million originally planned, is in response to Washington's decision last month to give its secret service \$20 million for action aimed at moderating Iran's Islamic government. Islamic hardline Deputy Ahmad Nateq-Nuri told parliament during Tuesday's debate: "Confrontation between Iran and the United States is inevitable. Those Iranians who dream of negotiations with Washington are deceiving themselves."

Iraq seen close to U.N. oil deal

BAGHDAD (R) — Baghdad diplomats and analysts said on Tuesday they believe Iraq's reentry to oil markets was now closer than at any time since the U.N. imposed comprehensive sanctions. They said Iraq's agreement to enter talks with the U.N. came after months of quiet diplomacy conducted by U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, and France and Russia, both permanent members of the Security Council.

A well-placed diplomat said: "(France, Russia and Ghali) managed to persuade Iraq to look positively at Resolution 986 and accept a dialogue to discuss its terms." That resolution permits Iraq to make limited and closely-supervised oil sales provided the proceeds are spent on food and medicine. Iraq has consistently refused the terms, saying they infringe its sovereignty.

Another diplomat said: "France and Russia and Ghali gave assurances to Iraq that they would work hard to make the terms more palatable to Iraq when discussing mechanism of implementation."

Diplomats said Iraq had already formed its delegation to the talks and was anxiously waiting for a signal from Dr. Ghali to leave the country.

In New York, U.N. spokeswoman Sylvana Foa said on Monday that Dr. Ghali had to gather a team of experts before giving Iraq a date for the New York talks.

The U.N. imposed sanctions on Iraq for invading Kuwait in 1990, but Resolution 986, passed in 1995, would allow Baghdad to sell \$2 billion of oil over six months. Thirty per cent of the revenues would be earmarked for Gulf war reparations and a further \$20 to \$30 million to meet other U.N. costs. The rest would be spent on food and medicine for Iraqis.

A diplomat in Baghdad said Iraq needed oil revenues but the U.N. also needed those funds to cover its operations in Iraq. "I think even Washington would like to see Iraq selling oil as that oil will finance U.N. efforts to disarm Iraq, other U.N. costs and war reparations," he said.

Iraq has engaged in two previous rounds of talks, in 1992 and 1993, on similar resolutions, but without result. The U.N. spokeswoman said Dr. Ghali's staff will discuss the implementation of 986, not its terms.

Iraq strongly objects to allocation of part of the proposed oil revenues to Kurds in the north of the country, in

an area protected by an air-exclusion zone imposed by the Western allies.

Baghdad also objects to U.N. insistence that most of the oil be shipped by pipeline through Turkey.

One diplomat said: "The way 986 will be implemented is in the hands of the secretary-general and I believe it is left to him to compromise the council's concern over Iraq's territorial integrity and situation in northern Iraq."

France sent a senior diplomat to Baghdad in November last year to say there could be some leeway in implementing the oil sales if Iraq accepted 986, the diplomat said.

Denis Bouchard, head of the Middle East section at the French foreign ministry, had lengthy talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and Foreign Minister Mohammad Al Sahaf during his five-day visit.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk also visited Baghdad, early in January, and diplomats said he pressed Iraqi leaders to change their attitude to the resolution in return for Moscow's help to soften its implementation.

Ordinary Iraqis have supported the government's de-

(Continued on page 7)

Jordanian traders upset over cut in exports to Iraq

By Rana Sabbagh Reuter

AMMAN — Jordan's pro-Iraqi business community said on Tuesday a government decision to cut exports to Baghdad by half will be a severe blow to industries still suffering from the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

"Most manufacturers who rely on Iraq will face problems with lower volume and margins of profit which will eventually have a knock-on effect on the rest of the economy," conceded an official, who asked not to be identified.

Officials, citing high Iraqi debts to Jordan, said on Monday the Kingdom would slash exports sent to Iraq under their annual trade protocol in return for cheap Iraqi oil.

Amman said it will send items allowed by the United Nations worth just over \$200 million, down from over \$400 million last year. It said Iraqi oil imports would continue unaffected.

"We will bite the bullet and try to override the effects," said Mohammad Abu Hassan, chairman of the Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural company.

Over 50 per cent of its annual turnover of 26 million

dinars (\$37 million) in detergents, soaps and biscuits, goes to Iraq.

"We will seek to open new markets, regionally, and we shall try to sell to the Iraqi market directly, without having to go through the annual trade protocol," he told Reuters.

Under the protocol, Jordan's Central Bank handled the accounts, paying local exporters out of a fund financed by oil imports from Iraq. Any attempt to sell outside the oil-for-goods barter arrangement would have to overcome Iraqi hard-currency shortages caused by the six-year-old United Nations sanctions that ban Iraqi oil sales other than to Jordan.

The Amman stock market index slid to 154.10 points on Tuesday, down 0.65 per cent from 155.11 points on Monday on fears industries serving Iraq will suffer.

Many traders said the move was not for economic reasons, as officials had said. "They seemed to be happy with money arrangements of past protocols," said one industrialist. "Why the sudden awakening?"

Previously, an estimated \$400 million was deposited each year at Jordan's Central Bank for oil received by Jordan and used to pay local

firms for exports to Iraq.

Part of the Iraqi oil imports of 75,000 barrels per day were supposed to be paying off Baghdad's over \$1.2 billion debt from the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war, but the debt has remained.

According to Chamber of Commerce figures, nearly 40 per cent of Jordanian exports of manufactured goods went to Iraq. They totalled 119 million (\$169 million) in the first seven months of 1995, up from 105 million dinars (\$149 million) a year earlier.

Most business leaders expressed hope economic links with Iraq, strong for two decades, would weather the political strains and give them a share of the Iraqi market once sanctions are lifted.

"We are keen to build on these positive ties," said Khalidoun Abu Hassan, head of Jordan's powerful Chamber of Industry. "I hope we will overcome all hurdles."

Halim Abu Rahma, from an organisation trying to find non-traditional markets, was among the few to support the move.

"Trade protocols are a hindrance to Jordanian exporters," he said. "Since we are moving towards joining the World Trade Agreement, there is no room for protocols."



KING VISITS PRIME MINISTRY: His Majesty gave his directives to the government on King Hussein on Tuesday visited the Prime Ministry and met with Prime Minister Shimon Peres. The King was briefed on the government's plans to provide food items General Abdul Hafez Miral and senior army officers (Petra photo) with the government's measures. The King

Official results confirm Arafat control of power

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Election officials issued final results for Palestinian legislative polls Tuesday, giving Yasser Arafat's Fateh movement the lion's share of the seats in the new self-rule council.

The commission ended more than 48 hours of delays and confusion following Saturday's poll by announcing that members of Fateh had won 65 of the 88 seats in the legislative council created under the terms of the 1993 Israel-Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy accords.

Fateh can also count on the

unwavering support of three allied candidates who ran as independents and a deputy from the small FIDA party, giving Mr. Arafat a crushing majority of 69 seats in the legislature set up to govern Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during three years of "final status" negotiations with Israel.

Mr. Arafat himself won election Saturday as the first Palestinian president with 88.1 per cent of the vote.

Analysts said Fateh profited from the constituency-based, first-past-the-post majority electoral system set up by the interim Palestinian

National Authority (PNA) which allowed the movement to eliminate smaller parties and lesser known independents.

The Palestine People's Party (formerly Communist Party), for example, failed to elect a single representative to the council.

The decision by hardline left-wing and Islamic "rejectionist" parties to boycott the poll in protest at Mr. Arafat's gradualist strategy for creating an independent state also provided a big boost to Fateh.

(Continued on page 7)

8 opposition activists face trial in Bahrain

MANAMA (Agencies) — Eight arrested Bahraini opposition leaders will be tried on charges of incitement and involvement in anti-government protests blamed on foreign-backed groups, an official said on Tuesday.

"The (Interior Ministry) statement is clear... they will be charged and will stand trial," the official told Reuters.

Bahrain late on Monday said it had arrested eight Shi'ite Muslim clerics including Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, a former member of parliament, accused of inciting a plot to destabilise security and stability in the country.

"The security forces have arrested elements of the group who played a major role in inciting crimes of riots and sabotage and escalating them," an Interior Ministry official said.

"There is proof, evidence

and documents supported by pictures which prove the group's involvement in the incidents and would be submitted to the legal authorities."

The official said the eight had "incited crimes of fires and sabotage, broadcast statements, news and incorrect rumours inside and outside... which disturbs security and damages national interests using mosques and sermons and holding illegal gatherings."

The arrests followed three nights of riots, fires and acts of sabotage in several Shi'ite villages, prompting the Bahrain military to warn it might step in to crush the unrest "once and for all" and that martial law might be imposed.

Residents said no violence or sabotage acts were reported on Monday night and life and business in Bahrain was normal on Tuesday.

"The patience and perseverance, wisdom and tolerance shown by Bahrain despite atrocities and extreme provocation through uncivilised and alien behaviour has reached breaking point," Bahrain's Gulf Daily News warned.

The Bahraini army said Saturday it was ready to intervene to crush the unrest under martial law — which would have to be declared by the emir, Sheikh Isa Ben Sulman Al Khalifa.

"News of the arrest of any citizen is sad and anathema to any government," the Gulf Daily News said.

"But when the voice of wisdom is silenced by insane acts of arson, when kindness is confronted with cruelty, when tolerance is answered with terror, law and order must be implemented."

Akhbar Al Khaleej, an

(Continued on page 7)

Syria signals flexibility and optimism ahead of new peace talks

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syria on Tuesday expressed hope that peace talks with Israel resuming in the United States on Wednesday could have positive results and said it was not against security arrangements that would ensure Israel's safety.

"Syria does not object to security arrangements that would disperse the Israeli fears and ensure peace at the same time," the official daily Tishreen said.

"But it should be pointed out that exaggeration in security obsessions turns at the end into obstruction to the peace process," it added.

Syrian-Israeli peace talks resuming in Maryland on Jan. 24 will include military experts from both countries to discuss the security

arrangements that would follow the proposed Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Tishreen said it was time to discuss the scope of Israel's withdrawal from the Golan because "... discussion of security arrangements requires an Israeli commitment to full withdrawal."

The central leadership of the National Progress Front, the ruling coalition in Syria, was hopeful during a meeting on Monday night that the Maryland talks would lead to peace.

Official sources said the leadership reviewed a report presented by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa of the talks to date and stressed the importance of Israel's withdrawal from the strategic

Golan for peace with Syria. They said the leadership "found in the recent developments a positive step on the way to lead the peace process to its sought objectives..."

"And found the atmosphere of the last rounds of talks a positive development that would help talks achieve their goals."

Both sides reported progress during the last round of talks held in December in Maryland, near Washington.

Syria's negotiating team had already arrived in Washington on Monday headed by Syria's Ambassador to the United States Walid Al Mualeem.

The talks at Wye Plantation to be joined by military experts are to focus on security guarantees in the event of

an Israeli pullout from the Golan — a major stumbling block in previous rounds.

The government daily Al Thawra wrote Wednesday's negotiations "come amid optimism of positive and acceptable results which will serve the cause of peace."

Syrian radio also said security arrangements must be "balanced and preserve the sovereignty" of Syria, and called on Israel to "show flexibility in putting forward acceptable proposals which respect the principles of balance."

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres meanwhile said the two sides would talk about water and economics, according to Israeli parliamentary officials.

He told a meeting of the

parliament's defence and foreign affairs committee that there would be no discussions about borders.

The Israeli premier also said the United States wanted to see some positive results by the end of the year in the negotiations.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is to "actively participate" in Wednesday's new session of talks, the State Department said.

An Israeli official said Monday that Mr. Peres was expecting "clear answers" from Syria on its military questions.

"Peres wants clear answers on issues like an early warning system for the Golan Heights following an eventual Israeli withdrawal or the

deployment of a foreign observer force in the region," the adviser told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"These discussions will be much longer than we thought at the start, for the Syrians have still not clearly told us what they mean when they talk about peace," he told state radio.

The Israeli team, headed by foreign ministry official Uri Savir, has already left for Washington. It includes General Uzi Dayan, head of the army planning department, and General Danny Yatom, Mr. Peres' top military advisor.

"The presence of these generals will allow us to resume the discussions on security arrangements," Mr. Savir said before leaving.

Peres insists PLO amend charter

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres reiterated Tuesday that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) must unambiguously cancel references in its charter to the destruction of Israel as the price for continuing the peace process.

Speaking a day before a scheduled meeting with newly-elected Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Mr. Peres said the PLO "must cancel this charter without wavering, as promised in writing in the Palestinian autonomy accords signed in September."

He also rejected a suggestion by one of the most prominent members of the Palestinian legislative council elected Saturday, Hanan Ashrawi, who said the council should adopt a Palestinian constitution without changing the charter.

The charter can only be changed by a two-thirds vote of the 630 members of the PLO parliament-in-exile, the Palestine National Council (PNC).

"That's not possible, you have to choose," Mr. Peres told Israeli radio. "You can't be a member of the autonomy council committed to peace negotiations with Israel while at the same time belonging to a PNC which calls for the destruction of Israel."

Under the PLO-Israeli peace accords, the Palestinians pledged to amend the PLO charter within two months of the inaugural session of the new legislative council. The council is expected to hold its first meeting in late February.

Mr. Peres also confirmed that Israel would let all PNC members, most of whom live in exile, to enter the Palestinian territories for a meeting on the charter.

"Even Nayef Hawatmeh can come back if he wants," Mr. Peres said, referring to the head of the Damascus-based Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine which Israel accuses of carrying out numerous attacks.

Officials meanwhile said that Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres would meet Wednesday at the Erez crossing from Israel into the Gaza Strip.

Arafat advisor Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP the two leaders would discuss the next stage of the peace process following Saturday's Palestinian elections, and other outstanding issues such as the release of Palestinian prisoners remaining in Israeli jails.

Israeli Radio said Mr. Peres would congratulate Mr. Arafat on his election as president.

In his radio remarks, Mr. Peres also called on the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to pursue "the struggle against terrorism."

In Cairo, a Palestinian diplomat said the PNC may meet at the Arab League in the Egyptian capital for talks on removing calls for the destruction of Israel from its charter.

"The PNC may hold sessions at Arab League headquarters for the first few months after the elections," he said, asking not to be named.

Mr. Arafat was considering Cairo as a compromise location for the PNC session after some opposition figures living abroad refused to return to the territories, the diplomat close to the PLO leader said.

Mr. Arafat, on the other hand, is opposed to holding the sessions in Syria or Jordan where many of the exiles live.

George Habash, a top Arafat rival and leader of the

(Continued on page 7)

Success of Syria-Israel peace up to parties themselves, Clinton says

WASHINGTON (USIA) — President Clinton says the United States will do whatever it can to make it possible for Syria and Israel to reach an agreement, "but the timetable... is entirely up to the parties." Responding to press questions during a photo opportunity with Israeli Foreign Minister Barak January 22, the president said the successes of the past three years show that the "appropriate posture" for the United States is "to be helpful and to try to support the parties as they search for peace."

Following is the text of the president's remarks, as released by the White House: Question: Is your state of the Union all ready, Mr. President?

Answer: Just about ready. Q: Some people are expecting a campaign-style approach. A: I don't think so. What I'm going to say tomorrow night is that the state of the union is strong, but it can be stronger; that I am absolutely confident and optimistic about our ability to meet the challenges that our country faces, and I'm going to say what I think they are and what I believe we should all do about them. Q: Are you going to reach out to the Republicans to try and get things done? A: Absolutely. I did last year and I will again. I think, you know, we have differences, but we should attempt to resolve those differences. And we should attempt, where we can't resolve them, to set them aside and do what we can do. Remember, throughout our history, the system that the framers of the Constitution set up demands honourable, principled compromise. Q: Did Dick Arney's comments concern you? A: Well, I don't think we should default on the debt. I think that would be a terrible mistake. It's an unacceptable

thing for a great nation to do and we've never done it. Q: Is this going to be longer than last year? A: Tune in. I suppose it depends on the applause, doesn't it? (Laughter). Q: Mr. President, I'm a correspondent of the Israeli television — do you hope to reach an agreement between Israel and Syria by the end of '96? A: Well, of course, that's up to Israel and Syria. All the United States has tried to do throughout this process is to try to do whatever we could to encourage the process of peace. And I think the timetable has to be driven by the progress that is made. That is entirely up to the parties. Q: What are you doing in order to speed up such an agreement? A: We will do whatever we can, whatever we're asked to do, within limits to — within the limits of our ability, to try to make it possible for the parties to succeed. But the timetable is entirely up to the progress of the substance of the negotiations, and that is entirely up to the parties. The United States — I think we've had some success in the last three years because we have not tried to dictate terms or anything of that kind. We have only tried to be helpful and to try to support the parties as they search for peace. And if you look at the results of the last three years, that is the appropriate posture for the United States. Q: Do you hope to initiate a meeting between President Assad and Prime Minister Peres of Israel? Is it one of your wishes for the months ahead? A: Well, that, of course, will be up to them. If it is helpful getting them to the point where they can make a peace, obviously, that would be a good thing. But that is a — like every other part of this process, ultimately that is up to them.



CLEAN-UP: Palestinian workers remove campaign posters from Gaza City streets after the conclusion Saturday of the Palestinian elections (Reuters photo)

Israel-Tunisia ties is a major step for broader peace — U.S.

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Israel and Tunisia's decision to open interest sections in Tel Aviv and Tunis marks "an important step to widen the circle of peace in the Middle East," Secretary of State Christopher said at a special ceremony at the State Department on Monday. "This step today reflects how far the peace process has come — and how dramatically it is changing the Middle East for the better," the secretary added. In his remarks at the ceremony, Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahia noted that opening of the interest sections corresponds with Tunisia's "readiness to promote its relations with Israel in harmony with the evolution of the peace process and its various tracks."

For his part, Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak said that the agreement was "an important step forward in the long-journey to normalise and pacify the relations between Israel and its neighbours in the Middle East and around the Mediterranean." Asked whether a decision has been made to request U.S. monitors as part of an overall Israel-Syrian agreement to return the Golan Heights to Syria, Mr. Barak said that it was "too early to predict" whether such a request would be made. Furthermore, he added, he did not think the question of peacekeepers is central to an agreement. Following is the text of Mr. Christopher's remarks: "It is my great pleasure to host Tunisian Foreign Minister Ben Yahia and Israeli Foreign Minister Barak. Today we take an important step to widen the circle of peace in the Middle East. I am pleased to announce that for the first time, Tunisia and Israel have decided to establish official facilities, called interest sections, in each other's countries. By the 15th of April each state will host representatives of the other government, so as to facilitate political consultations, travel and trade between the two countries. "Today's step reflects how far the peace process has

Palestinian state only solution, Egypt says

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Egypt called Monday for an independent Palestinian state, saying it was the only way to end the long-standing conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours. "The establishment of an independent Palestinian state is a prerequisite and inevitable. The Arab-Israeli conflict ends only when such a state is set up, and what has been achieved so far is only a stage," Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa told the state-run Abu Dhabi television in a satellite interview. "We should not back off such an issue and every Arab country should not stop supporting the establishment of an independent Palestinian entity."

Israel has never accepted the principle of Palestinian independence, but Palestinian leaders voiced optimism that their own state was within reach after historic elections of a president and legislative council on Saturday. The two sides are to open negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories in May. Mr. Musa, speaking in a television debate on the Arab-Israeli conflict, also said Middle East peace must be based on "understanding and balance," in a reference to Israel's military edge over the Arabs and alleged possession of nuclear weapons. "Attempts to control and acquire power in this region are unacceptable as this means a return to the old mentality," he said. "If there are Israeli nuclear programmes, then there will be similar programmes in other countries. So we must deal with the Israeli nuclear issue if we have to deal with any regional order or arrangements."

Tough race seen for Kuwaiti parliament

KUWAIT (R) — Angry accusations of vote-buying ahead of Kuwait parliamentary polls herald a bruising competition for control of the only elected legislature on the Arab side of the Gulf, diplomats said on Monday. The opposition's decision to sound the alarm about alleged fraud a full nine months before the October polls raised the prospect of a mud-slinging campaign that could stir long-running tensions between government and parliament, they said. The government headed by the ruling Sabah family is expected to work hard in the polls to wrest control of the chamber from opposition deputies who have carved legislative inroads into government prerogatives since the last elections in 1992. But the government strongly denies accusations by veteran opposition Deputy Ahmad Al Khatib that officials plan to rig the poll and subvert parliament. "This is extremely dangerous," Mr. Khatib told parliament this month. "People have started paying bribes to buy votes, and the price is

already 5,000 (\$16,000) per vote. "This is an attempt to destroy democracy. State funds are being used for election purposes." Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah blasted the charges as baseless and challenged MPs to prove them or withdraw them. He said the government would not tamper with Kuwait's 30-year-old experiment in limited parliamentary representation. But days later Parliament Speaker Al Saddoun raised the stakes by announcing he had learned a "supreme committee" had been formed to influence the elections. Mr. Saddoun gave no details, but added that similar attempts to buy Kuwaitis' loyalties in the 1992 polls had failed because electors had been determined to vote out of conviction. Whatever the outcome of Kuwait's all-male assembly polls, the prime minister is by tradition a Sabah member. The post is now held by Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egyptians visiting Jerusalem are 'sinners' — Gad Al Haq

CAIRO (AFP) — The sheikh of Al Azhar, Sunni Islam's highest authority, said Tuesday that Egyptians who visit East Jerusalem are "sinners," but eased slightly his ban on visits by religious officials. "If a member of the public goes to Jerusalem whether on invitation from Israel or by his own decision he is a sinner," Sheikh Gad Al Haq Ali Gad Al Haq told the opposition daily Al Wafd. Sheikh Gad Al Haq underlined that Egyptian religious leaders, both Muslim and Christian, still refuse to visit the holy sites in Jerusalem. But he added that "a visit by a Christian clergyman or an Al Azhar official does not give legitimacy to (claims) that Jerusalem has become Israeli because he goes as an individual, not a nation," he said. However, the position of religious leaders refusing visits is "unified and emerges from their Egyptian patriotism," he said. Sheikh Gad Al Haq said that in negotiations with the Palestinians on the future of Jerusalem set to begin in May, Israel must return East Jerusalem with the "land it took from Jordan in 1967." Pope Shenouda III, patriarch of Egypt's Coptic Christians, has also repeatedly ordered his followers not to visit Jerusalem.

Israel prolongs use of torture in custody

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel extended Monday for three more months permission for the Shin Bet secret service to use limited torture on prisoners suspected of being Islamic militants, an official statement said. The authorisation was extended from Tuesday until April 23, a statement from the prime minister's office said. The decision was taken by a ministerial commission charged with supervising the activities of Shin Bet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Outgoing Shin Bet director Karmi Gilon and his successor Ami Ayalon were present at the discussions. Limited use of torture, as defined by a judicial committee, requires special permission from the government commission renewable every three months.

Sudan to retrieve 'kidnapped' children

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan will send an envoy to Cuba to try to retrieve more than 270 Sudanese children it claims were abducted by southern rebels and sent there for military training, the daily Akhbar Al Yom said on Tuesday. The head of the state Higher Council for Peace, Lino Rol Deng, said a regional minister from the southern province of East Equatoria would leave for Cuba in the next few days, the paper reported. Mr. Deng said his council had set up a commission with the Sudanese foreign ministry to "handle the question of the 271 kidnapped south Sudanese minors." Last July, Mr. Deng said an envoy would be headed "soon" to Cuba but there were no further reports of a mission. At the time, he said an earlier envoy had met with the children who "asked for help and expressed a desire to return to Sudan."

Iran police seize 1,000 'devil dishes'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Police in southeast Iran have seized more than 1,000 satellite dishes from smugglers violating a year-long ban on the "devil dishes," the daily Jomhuri Eslami reported Tuesday. The dishes, smuggled into the province of Sistan-Baluchestan, were hidden in a tanker truck, the newspaper said. Hardliners in the government forced through a ban on what they call "devil dishes" in April 21 to prevent "depraved" Western programmes from being beamed into Iranian homes. But satellite channels are popular in Iran and people have tried to get round the ban by smuggling and using smaller, more easily-hidden dishes.

Arsonist of video shops held in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Police arrested a Muslim militant after 10 years on the run for fire-bombing "blasphemous" video clubs, the daily Al Ahrar reported on Tuesday. Police captured Ahmad Lutfi Al Gindy on Monday in the Cairo slum of Imbaba after learning he had been working there for several years as cab driver and was planning to flee the country soon, the paper said. Mr. Gindy was sentenced in absentia in 1986 to ten years in prison for involvement in attacks on video clubs in Cairo. Video shops are a favourite target of extremists, who accuse them of distributing "blasphemous" and "obscene" movies.

AOHR Jordan disowns report

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan chapter of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) on Tuesday disowned a report on the human rights situation in Jordan in 1995 prepared by one of its members that had prompted the Interior Minister to issue a rebuttal. Labib Kamhawi, vice-president of AOHR (Jordan), said the report was drafted by AOHR Joint Secretary Hani Dahlah but was not approved or even reviewed by the full AOHR board. The report had charged that the Jordanian government was curbing the freedom of expression and waging a campaign against opponents of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. In his rebuttal, Interior Minister Salameh Hammad categorically rejected the charges and denied the security authorities were arresting and detaining people for several months without trial. "No citizen was detained by the General Intelligence Department," said Mr. Hammad. "If any arrest took place it was within the framework of the law and with an official warrant issued by the public prosecutor of the State Security Court. Mr. Hammad denied claims of Mr. Shbeilat's lawyers that they were prevented from attending his interrogation. "From the very beginning of the interrogation of Mr. Shbeilat, his lawyer was given the right to attend all sessions," the minister said. "Accusations that attempts made to arrest Mr. Shbeilat's son are baseless."

elections and its proceeding, but nobody has alleged poll rigging in any Jordanian courts," he said. Mr. Hammad added that the government was not monopolising mass media in the country and freedom of expression was granted to all citizens. He said that some editors of weekly newspapers were sent to court for violating the press and publications laws. "Such cases concern the court, and the government has nothing to do with it," the minister added. "The report of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights was a hasty judgement and is the outcome of a partial vision of the reality and without verification of information and complaints the AOHR received," Mr. Hammad said. "We call upon AOHR officials to take facts in consideration when verifying complaints and information and to be careful and objective in taking decisions on human rights in Jordan," the nine-page statement concluded.

Dr. Kamhawi said Mr. Hammad's statement was based on a draft report by Mr. Dahlah, which was not approved and reviewed by the board of the AOHR. "No AOHR report on human rights in 1995 was issued," said Dr. Kamhawi. "I'm amazed by the statement by His Excellency, Mr. Dahlah did nothing but preparing a draft report which was not approved or reviewed by the organisation. We wish the minister had contacted us before issuing such a statement."

Dr. Kamhawi told the Jordan Times that the organisation had no figures on how many people were arrested by the General Intelligence Department, but "the AOHR have received a lot of complaints about such arrests. Unfortunately there is a little access to verify these complaints." He said that the AOHR "believes that the State Security Court should be removed and civilians should be tried by civilian court and not by a military one." "I believe that there is a retreat in the human rights record in the Kingdom and the level of tolerance and freedom is slipping," Dr. Kamhawi asserted.

Jordan Times Tel: 684311

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 72311-19
PROGRAMME TWO
14:00 The Flamingos
14:30 Speed Racer
15:00 Bill Nye The Science Guy
15:30 Amazing Stories
16:00 Voyagers
17:00 Sophie Et Virginie
17:30 Serie — Le Cascadore
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Sports Et Musique
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Anything For A Laugh
20:00 The Nature of Things
20:25 Hawaii Five — O
21:10 Documentary — Horizon/poetical attractions
22:00 News in English
22:25 Prison
22:45 Drama Airwolf
23:00 The Silk Road
00:30 Second Thoughts

PRAYER TIMES

05:09 Sunrise
06:30 Sunrise
11:47 Dhuhr
14:41 Asr
17:05 Maghreb
18:26 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedfish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terzian Church Tel. 623566
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 652826
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624538
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Under the effect of a new depression affecting the Kingdom, temperatures will drop with rain expected to fall over all regions. Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance of snow falling over Aljoun heights, and winds becoming westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 3/8
Aqaba 7 / 17
Deserts 2 / 9
Jordan Valley 8 / 16

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 11 Aqaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 69 per cent, Aqaba 23 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Zaidieh 736011
Dr. Fakher Belbeisi 663412
Dr. Khalil Al Tawq 775253
Dr. Mohammad Al Ghoul 790104
First pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 773336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741

Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Randa Shabih 995710
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Arman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information
(directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 660100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81381/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. 642316
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Muhass, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Mushar Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 66612737
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajirah 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77511/26
Army, J. Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 60224050
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)900560
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)909091
IBRID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)775555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)722275

Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:35 Jeddah (RJ)
08:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:15 Larnaca, Damascus (RJ)
14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:40 Istanbul (RJ)
17:35 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
18:00 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:05 Rome (RJ)
18:10 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
18:20 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
18:25 London, Berlin (RJ)
23:20 Beirut (RJ)
06:10 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

09:50 Cairo (MS)
10:30 Jeddah (SV)
12:15 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
14:20 Algiers (AJ)
20:00 Sanaa (Y)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
22:05 Larnaca (CY)
22:45 Athens, Beirut (OA)
23:25 Amsterdam (BA)
23:59 London, Beirut (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
09:45 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:15 Rome (RJ)
10:35 Berlin, London (RJ)
11:15 Istanbul (RJ)
11:25 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
19:10 Colombo (RJ)
19:35 Beirut (RJ)
20:05 Riyadh (RJ)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
20:25 New Delhi (RJ)
20:30 Dhahran (RJ)
21:10 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

07:45 Beirut (ME)
08:15 London (KJ)
12:00 Cairo (MS)
12:00 Jeddah (SV)
13:25 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
15:20 Sharjah (AH)
21:00 Sanaa (Y)

22:50 Larnaca (CY)

06:25 Amsterdam (KL)
05:00 Beirut, Athens (OA)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils. per kg.
Apple 700 / 500
Banana 650 / 650
Banana (Mukammal) 580 / 580
Banana (imported) 650 / 700
Cabbage 80 / 50
Carrot 180 / 100
Cauliflower 380 / 250
Cucumbers (large) 300 / 150
Cucumbers (small) 500 / 400
Eggplant 200 / 100
Garlic 900 / 750
Grapefruit 220 / 150
Lemon 180 / 100
Marrow (large) 100 / 50
Marrow (small) 200 / 100
Onion (green) 180 / 100
Onion (dry) 250 / 150
Orange 600 / 450
Pepper (hot) 550 / 450
Pepper (sweet) 550 / 450
Potato 250 / 180
Radish 180 / 100
String Beans 650 / 500
Spinach 140 / 80
Tomato 140 / 80



IFTAR WITH POTASH COMPANY STAFF: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday greets engineers and workers at the Ghor Safi Arab Potash Company (APC) where he attended an iftar hosted by the APC to celebrate the company's achievements. Prince Hassan and the other guests attended Al Maghreb prayer at the company's mosque. Addressing the staff, Prince Hassan praised their performance, saying their dedication and tireless efforts were behind the company's achievements and the unique status it enjoys. The Crown Prince toured the company's various sections and chaired a regular meeting of its board of directors. (Petra Photo)

NRA, U.S. oil firm open negotiations

AMMAN (J. T.) — U.S. oil firm Anadarko Tuesday opened negotiations with the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) on gas and oil exploration operations in the northern basalt regions of Jordan, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The agency said representatives of the two sides are aiming for an agreement on production-sharing in these regions, adding that the American firm has been provided with results of geological and geophysical

studies conducted earlier by the NRA.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Samih Darwazah had earlier said that he expected U.S. oil firms to sign oil and gas concession agreements covering nearly half of the country.

According to Mr. Darwazah, another U.S. firm, Transglobal, has signed a letter of intent to prospect for oil in the Dead Sea area. He said U.S. firms Enron and Amoco were both in talks with the new

National Oil Company to boost natural gas production from the northeastern Rishah district.

Last month the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources awarded the National Oil Company a 50-year concession to prospect for oil and natural gas in the Kingdom.

The renewable deal allows for the exploration of oil and gas in a specific region located in northeast and eastern regions.

U.S.-based foundation seeks to help Jordan, region in development areas

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A two-member team representing the Global World Development Foundation (GWDF) has arrived in Jordan to study areas where the foundation can be of financial and technical help in the country's development projects.

Ms. van Essen, president of the foundation, and GWDF Director General Hashem Sayegh met with several Jordanian officials to discuss projects where their organisation can help, and they plan to meet their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Basma for similar talks, they said.

The team plans to spend a week in Jordan meeting with Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat and touring areas with potential for development.

The GWDF is a non-profit organisation based in Los Angeles, California

which "seeks to build a solid basis for peace in the Middle East in order to generate confidence among the people that there is indeed a global future."

The team's programme includes building appropriate water supply systems, enabling the development of a comprehensive water distribution network for Jordan and the surrounding region, implementing medical advances to aid the people of Jordan and the Middle East in all areas of medical services, agricultural development which will be a natural result of water production, sewerage control, establishing waste water treatment plants and recycling of treated water, and pollution control programmes among others.

The GWDF, formed by a group of global philanthropists and business leaders, is dedicated to stimulating economic development and strengthening international relations in

the Middle East region, according to Mr Sayegh.

He said the driving force is the ongoing peace process that presents the foundation with a positive environment to build and lead the world successfully into the next era.

Mr. Sayegh said the organisation seeks to create and implement projects that focus on creating a better standard of living for Jordan, Palestine and Israel as well as other surrounding countries in the region to help achieve peace.

He told the Jordan Times that he has already met Palestinian National Authority President Arafat and other Palestinian leaders for similar discussions, adding that after the team has finalised its survey in the region, it will leave for the U.S. to conduct a thorough study before deciding on allocations for these projects.

Jordan, Indonesia look into prospects of joint work in population, development areas

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma conferred in her office Tuesday with Haryono Suyono, Indonesian Minister of Population and chairman of the Indonesian National Family Planning Board to discuss similarities in the developmental efforts of Jordan and Indonesia in population-related affairs.

A statement from the Princess's office at the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) said the two sides reviewed possible future cooperation between the two countries and agreed that an exchange of experiences would be beneficial to both.

Dr. Suyono, who arrived in Amman Monday evening at the head of a high level delegation, was briefed on the QAF activities and socioeconomic development projects implemented through its community development centres.

QAF hosts the Jordanian National Population Commission (JNPC) and the Jordanian National Committee for Women, both of whose activities complement each other and are

executed at the grassroots level through these centres, Princess Basma said at Tuesday's meeting.

According to a report by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Dr. Suyono met earlier with Minister of Health Aref Batayneh and discussed population and health services issues.

The visiting minister was briefed on the Kingdom's health services, especially mother and child care services.

Dr. Suyono also Tuesday met with Minister of Labour Nader Abul Shaer in his capacity as chairman of the Jordanian National Population Commission and reviewed possible cooperation in population issues and family planning. The two officials also discussed the experiences of their countries in this area.

The Indonesian Minister, according to Petra, expressed his country's readiness to place its experience at Jordan's disposal in family planning, adding that he was interested in benefiting from Jordan's mother and child care services for Indonesia.



HRH Princess Basma Tuesday meets with visiting Indonesian Minister of Population Haryono Suyono at the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (Petra photo)

The commission's secretary general Nabih Salameh outlined the objectives of the commission, and Ali Nasrallah, the director general of the Vocational Training Corporation presented a

briefing on the corporation's training of young men and women and helping them to find jobs in various trades.

According to Petra, Dr. Suyono, who later wound

up his visit to Jordan and left for home, suggested that Jordan and Indonesia launch a joint training programme on population activities for personnel in the two countries.

Japanese study to suggest improvements to Aqaba port facilities

AQABA (Petra) — A specialised Japanese firm contracted by the Aqaba port authorities is about to complete an integrated study aimed at boosting the port's capacity and modernising services it offers to cargo vessels and passenger ships, an official announced Tuesday.

According to Deputy Director of the Aqaba Port Corporation Akel Abu Tayeh, the study will make recommendations for raising the efficiency of the harbour and suggest other measures deemed essential for attracting commercial shipping to the port.

Also aiming to help the port cope with the expected flurry of shipping activity during the peace era, the study will help the corporation devise ways to enlarge the port and increase the effectiveness of the wharves used for loading and unloading goods, boost transit service and enlarge the containers port, Mr. Abu Tayeh said.

He said such plans would be targeted for the short term, and added that in the long term (in 15 years), the corporation plans to gradually move the main harbour at Aqaba to the southern coast leaving the present harbour to serve passenger ships.

Mr. Abu Tayeh said Jordanian tour operators have succeeded in increasing the

number of tourist groups coming to Aqaba, Petra and Wadi Rum since the conclusion of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October 1994.

He said currently four passenger ships regularly transport tourists from the Egyptian port of Sharm Al-Sheikh to Aqaba as well as to Eilat in Israel.

In addition, the Aqaba-Nweibeh route has been actively used by two ferry boats transporting pilgrims to Aqaba on their way to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, as well as vehicles. These ferries, he said, make daily voyages between Aqaba and Nweibeh.

At present Aqaba is witnessing an active sheep trade, serving as a centre for receiving the sheep for the local markets and for re-export to Lebanon, Syria and the Palestine self-rule areas, Mr. Abu Tayeh said.

Port levies, he said are \$3.5 for each head of sheep reported to Eilat for shipment to the Palestine self-rule areas or on other shipments heading to neighbouring regions.

Mr. Abu Tayeh said a week ago that the port received 202,000 heads of sheep from three vessels. The sheep were bound for sale in Jordan and other countries in the region.

Official says department duty is to uphold press, publications law

AMMAN (J.T.) — Director General of the Press and Publications Department Mohammad Amin has defended the performance of his department and said 28 court cases were filed against newspapers in 1995.

In a column published in Al Aswaq Arabic daily Monday, Mr. Amin said seven of the cases were filed by citizens, seven by the Press and Publications Department, two by other government departments, and 12 cases were brought by other institutions.

Mr. Amin said the duty of his department was to ensure the compliance of publications by the Constitution and law.

He said there was no such thing as absolute freedom of expression in the Constitution and international conventions, saying the Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression "within the limits of law."

He added that Article 30 of the International Convention On Civil Rights

forbids any calls for national, racial or religious hatred which incite discrimination, hostility and violence.

"Thus there are limits to the freedom of expression as our law stipulates... the Press and Publications Law preserves the freedom of expression in a manner that protects the society," Mr. Amin said.

He dismissed charges that the Press and Publications Law was backward, saying those who prepared it were pioneers in their quest to safeguard public freedoms.

He noted that the Jordanian legislation is no different than other legislation in many European democracies, and at times more advanced than some of them.

The Italian constitution, Mr. Amin said, gives the judicial authority the power to confiscate newspapers in case "of a crime and in case they violated stipulations of the press law."

"This is not the case in Jordan; our law is much more advanced; the execu-

tive and judicial authorities do not have the power to confiscate newspapers," he said.

Defending government censorship, Mr. Amin said democratic countries such as the United Kingdom still practise censorship in the theatre arts and film industry, and that the British authorities even amend or ban scripts of plays.

He confirmed that there is a great margin for expressing views in the U.S., but asked, "What views?"

"The development of Western democracies and the free market economy has led to monopolies practiced by the 'empires of capital' which believe in the need to produce and promote their merchandise and defend their policies and monopolies. They sought to buy out the various mass media, newspapers and radio and television stations, and expression (in these mass media) has become unilateral," Mr. Amin said.

Tourism Investment Department earns JD 3.78m in '95

AMMAN (Petra) — The Tourism Investment Department (TID), a governmental organisation, Tuesday said operations of its hotels and resthouses in 1995 brought in revenues totalling JD 3.787 million and that it has set a target of JD 4.724 million for 1996.

According to Department Director Suleiman Bdoor

the yield was from a direct investment of JD 34.2 million in 23 tourist projects including hotels, resthouses and lands nearby these projects. He said only JD 20 million of the total are invested in hotels and resthouses. The rest, Mr. Bdoor said, has been invested in land.

Mr. Bdoor said the department allocated JD 5.173 million to modernise the tourist centres during 1996, especially those in Aqaba, Petra and Amman.

He said that the TID plans to build a hotel in Aqaba and convert the Rama building there, which is being used by the SSC as offices, into a 120-room three-star hotel this year.

Rotarians await arrival of international organisation's president

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Herbert G. Brown, president of Rotary International, will visit Amman over the weekend for a review of Rotarian activities in the Kingdom and might also be received by His Majesty King Hussein, a senior Rotary Club official said Tuesday.

Tawiq Kwar, governor for 1996 of the Rotary Club district that covers five countries in the region including Jordan, said the visit was a reaffirmation of the increasing involvement of Rotarians in local community development.

Mr. Brown arrives from Israel early Friday. He will visit two projects financed by the Rotarians in Jordan — a weaving centre in Yajouz village and a vocational training centre for the Young Women's Muslim Association.

Rotary International describes itself as an "organisation of business-

men and women united worldwide for the benefit of service to their community and country."

The Rotary Club of Amman was established in 1956. Since then four other Rotary clubs have been set up — Petra, Philadelphia, Jerash and Cosmopolitan — and another in Irbid. They work in perfect harmony and are often involved in joint projects in service of the community, according to Mr. Kwar.

Mr. Kwar said efforts were under way to set up a Rotary Club in Aqaba.

The Rotary District that Jordan belongs to includes Sudan, Egypt, Lebanon and Bahrain. There are more than 500 Rotary districts around the world, with many countries having five or 10 districts based on the strength of membership. Jordan has over 300 Rotarians.

In the last 25 years, the Rotary clubs of Amman have contributed nearly \$400,000 to various pro-

jects in Jordan. These include health services, setting up income-generating projects for rural communities, libraries, and helping the physically disabled.

Part of the funds were raised locally and the rest came from Rotary International.

"Charity begins at home," said Mr. Kwar referring to the Rotary International's principle that local Rotarians have to take the initiative to launch projects and raise funds before expecting matching contribution from the international body.

For example, Mr. Kwar said, if local Rotarians manage to raise \$10,000 then they could expect "matching funds" of up to four times that amount. He cited several examples where Jordanian Rotarians raised their own funds and contacted counterparts outside the country and secured additional financing for projects.

In the mid-80s, Rotary International adopted a pro-

gramme to eradicate polio around the world and raised \$490 million. It worked closely with the World Health Organisation and the ministries of health around the world in pressing the campaign, which was named Polio-Plus.

"We now expect the world to be declared polio-free by the year 2005," said Mr. Kwar.

As part of that programme, Jordanian Rotarians, in addition to securing a contribution of polio vaccines worth \$400,000 to Jordanian hospitals and clinics, were also instrumental in helping Yemen organise a Polio-Plus campaign there.

Rotary International was established in 1905 by Paul Harris, a lawyer in Chicago, Illinois, who launched regular meetings with like-minded businessmen in community services. The organisation came to be known as Rotary since "they were meeting at their homes on a rotating basis since they did

not have a permanent place," said Mr. Kwar.

Today, the Rotary network spans five continents with 1.2 million members spread over 27,000 clubs in 153 countries and 39 geographic areas.

Rotary International recognises King Hussein as a "world statesman and politician committed to promoting peace," said Mr. Kwar.

He noted that King Hussein has also recognised the "important work that Rotary International performs worldwide."

In a televised speech to the annual Rotary International conference held in Nice, France, last year and attended by 34,000 Rotarians from around the world, the King said:

"Your organisation is one of the most important in the world. It has always held in highest regard due your selfless devotion to others as exemplified by your motto 'Service Above Self'."

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAYS

- * "Unclothing and Horse's Move" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
- * "Ramadan Supermarket" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILMS

- * "Maria Stuart" at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 8:00 p.m.
- * A 60-minute film on Sicily (as part of a Sicily evening) at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Graphic works by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh (until Feb. 18)
- * Contemporary and traditional jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, Shmeisani (Tel. 699141) (until Jan. 31).
- * Plastic (abstract) art exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina (until Feb. 6).
- * Paintings by artist Raphael Chabrol at the French Cultural Centre (until Jan. 31).

South Korea charges Roh and Chun over Kwangju massacre

SEOUL (R) — South Korean prosecutors Tuesday formally charged ex-presidents Roh Tae-Woo and Chun Doo Hwan with sedition over events surrounding the 1980 army massacre of pro-democracy activists in Kwangju, prosecutors said.

It was the latest in a string of charges against the two former heads of state.

Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh already face mutiny charges over the 1979 coup that propelled them to power. They have also been indicted on corruption charges for amassing slush funds of hundreds of millions of dollars during their rule.

The brutal quelling of the popular uprising against military rule in the southwestern city is one of the most traumatic chapters in South Korean history. Secrecy has for many years surrounded the event.

"Chun, as the mastermind, and Roh... as a key player in various violence, mutiny and seditious activities com-

mitted a crime of trampling on the constitution," a prosecution statement said.

It said Mr. Chun and his military associates "believed protests in Kwangju could pose barriers to their bid to seize control, restricted media reports on Kwangju demonstrations on fear of worsening protests and intended to crush them."

Along with Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, six former senior military officers were indicted on sedition charges. They include former army chief of staff Hwang Yung-Si and generals-turned-politicians Lee Hak-Bong and Yoo Hak-Seong, who have already been arrested.

The others, who have not been held, are former Defence Minister Choo Young-Bock, then Martial Law Commander Lee Hui-Sung and former Military Academy President Cha Kyu-Hun.

"The Kwangju incident took place as the new military leadership tried to follow programmes aimed at

seizing political power," a prosecutor said.

The programmes included the closure of parliament, arrests of politicians, purging of journalists, a crackdown on democracy campaigners and a revision of the constitution.

About 200 people were killed by official count when members of crack special forces trained for combat with North Korea stormed the city to end the revolt. But residents say as many as 1,000 may have died.

The Kwangju rebellion erupted a day after the Chun-led military ordered the imposition of martial law across South Korea in May 1980 following a military coup in 1979.

Many Kwangju residents were also angry at the arrest of opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung, a local political hero whom the military accused of fanning protests.

A statement by the main opposition National Congress for New Politics, head-

ed by Kim Dae-Jung, said the prosecution failed to shed light on the fabrication of charges against Mr. Kim and accused the government of trying to end investigations quickly.

Prosecutors said the final authority for the order to send troops to Kwangju came from Mr. Chun.

The two former presidents could face execution if convicted although it is widely believed they will escape with jail terms.

Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh challenged the constitutional validity of a special law enacted to punish them and their former aides.

Last month parliament passed a law ordered by President Kim Young-Sam to punish his two predecessors for leading the crackdown in the city.

The law made possible the prosecution of Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, which President Kim described as "unfortunate but necessary steps to put history to rights."

Bangladeshi opposition parties call strike to foil Khaleda's election drive

SYLHET, Bangladesh (Agencies) — Bangladesh's main opposition parties called for a strike Wednesday in the northeastern city of Sylhet, where Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is scheduled to launch her campaign for the Feb. 15 election, police said Tuesday.

"The city is very tense...and we have been asked to be ready for anything," a police officer told Reuters. "The local administration might seek the help of the paramilitary soldiers and the army to ensure a safe passage for the prime minister."

Government officials said Mrs. Khaleda would launch the election campaign on behalf of her ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in Sylhet Wednesday.

The BNP is the only major party contesting the election, which the main opposition groups, including the Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina, are boycotting.

They have also threatened to resist the election, which they describe as farcical. Opposition parties Monday called for a "coordinated militant movement" to force Mrs. Khaleda to make way for a neutral caretaker administration to guarantee a free poll.

Mrs. Khaleda, elected in 1991 in what was billed as Bangladesh's first free poll, has rejected such demands as unconstitutional, and dismissed charges that her government rigged a 1994

parliamentary by-election.

Opposition leaders said they planned to "foil (Mrs. Khaleda's) campaign for a victory election."

"We are planning to call strikes anywhere she goes for election purposes," one said.

A host of small opposition groups taking part in next month's general election, many previously unheard of, met Home (Interior) Minister Abdul Maun Chowdhury on Monday and asked for security in the face of opposition threats.

Mrs. Khaleda vowed Tuesday to go ahead with Feb. 15's general elections despite an opposition boycott, saying otherwise the country would plunge into constitutional crisis.

"The election has to be held by Feb. 21 despite it being the month of Ramadan, for the sake of protecting democracy and constitutional rule," she said in a televised address to the nation.

Mrs. Khaleda stressed that putting back the polls as demanded by the opposition, would create a constitutional vacuum and push the country towards "serious constitutional crisis."

"Democracy will face certain disaster and this cannot be permitted," she added.

Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, started Monday in Bangladesh. Mrs. Khaleda, in her first political comments in recent weeks, hinted that the constitution could be amended after the parliamentary polls. She defend-

ed the decision to go ahead with the vote.

"It will create an atmosphere that will ensure participation of all parties in the future," the prime minister said, without elaborating.

Newspapers speculated that the BNP might amend the constitution after the new parliament goes into session after the Feb. 15 polls, to accommodate some opposition demands.

By doing so Mrs. Khaleda would prove that she had stood by her pledge not to do anything outside constitutional provisions, commentators said.

"I am announcing firmly that the government is to extend all-out cooperation to the Election Commission so that it can ensure free and fair voting," the prime minister added.

Criticising her rivals without mentioning them by name, the premier said they called strikes, caused suffering to the people and adversely affected Bangladesh's economy, to push their "unconstitutional and illogical" demands.

"They want to give power to an unelected person by removing an elected prime minister," Mrs. Khaleda said, appealing to all to extend help in holding peaceful elections.

She said her government was forced to go ahead with the elections as it was impossible to violate the constitution for the sake of a political settlement.

Colombian president is hit by new drug corruption charges

BOGOTA (R) — Colombian President Ernesto Samper faced a deepening political crisis Tuesday after a former top aide accused him of covering up the alleged use of Cali cartel drug money to win the presidency.

The explosive charge by former Defence Minister Fernando Botero, who managed Mr. Samper's 1994 campaign, reignited the drug corruption scandal that has dogged the Colombian leader since last summer.

And although Mr. Samper was cleared by a congressional committee just last month of any wrongdoing in the drug-related campaign finance scandal, he looks certain to become the target of a new probe that could eventually force him to resign or face impeachment proceedings.

Mr. Botero, breaking a five-month silence in two televised interviews broadcast Monday night, strongly disputed Mr. Samper's repeated claim that if any drug money entered his campaign it did so behind his back.

"He knew about it and is, unfortunately, very seriously compromised by irregular events relating to the campaign," Mr. Botero told the U.S.-based Spanish-language television news programme Univision.

Asked if Mr. Samper had lied about the \$6 million in cartel drug money that allegedly entered his campaign, Mr. Botero said: "Yes, yes, naturally."

Mr. Botero, son of the renowned painter and sculptor of the same name and a former right-hand man of the president, oversaw the arrests of six of the seven top leaders of the Cali cartel last summer. He had remained silent about the campaign finance scandal, and Mr. Samper's alleged role in it, since he resigned and was arrested in August on the drug-related charge of illicit enrichment stemming from the campaign.

"The only cure... the only one, is the truth," Mr. Botero said of what he described as the "sickness" within the government. "The political situation is so serious that the only way

out is to let the truth be known and for the country to assume the consequences of that truth," he told Univision.

His statement offered the first public backing by a key witness of Mr. Samper's former campaign treasurer, Santiago Medina, who testified in July that Mr. Samper personally approved the receipt of up to \$6 million in cartel drug money to support his campaign.

In a national television and radio address after Mr. Botero's charges were aired late Monday, an angry Samper branded his long-time friend's remarks as "monstrous" and flatly ruled out any move to resign because of them.

"It is with a profound sense of disillusion that I just listened to former Minister Fernando Botero's monstrous remarks," he said. "The truth tonight, although it hurts us, is that Botero is lying to save himself," he said.

Ghali sticks by his Burundi action proposals

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Secretary-General Boutros Ghali is pressing for some kind of a U.N. force to prevent violence in Burundi from turning into a new wave of ethnic killings in the central African country.

But Security Council envoys said Monday they were still deliberating about his suggestions to station peacekeepers in neighbouring Zaire or alternatively, get a commitment from nations to earmark a rapid reaction force that could help if trouble broke out.

The Council has already approved a mission to investigate sending U.N. guards to Burundi to protect international aid workers, under siege by militia in violence between radical Hutu and Tutsi groups.

Dr. Ghali six months ago proposed standby troops for Burundi and repeated his suggestions last week.

"We have discussed different options, among them a preventive deployment of forces, among them a blue guard which may help to help to protect our humanitarian people," Dr. Ghali told reporters after a Security Council session.

Asked if he had new proposals, he said: "I am proposing exactly the same idea I proposed six months ago."

The current Council President, Sir John Weston of Britain, said Dr. Ghali wanted some sort of green light from the Council before he submitted any detailed proposal in writing.

"We will report to our capitals and we will return to Burundi very soon and decide what more, if anything, we want to ask the secretary-general to do," said Sir John.

"We realise this is an urgent situation, both here and in capitals," he added. The Burundi government, particularly its Tutsi-led army, has rejected any troops or guards, regardless of the purpose.

Burundi has the same ethnic makeup as neighbouring Rwanda, where up to a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by Hutu militia and soldiers in 1994.

U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, visiting Burundi briefly Saturday warned the Tutsi-dominated army against toppling the country's fragile coalition government.

"Any government imposed by force from any source will only lead to the complete isolation of this beautiful country from the international community,"



South African President Nelson Mandela (left) meets his main black political rival Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi in Pretoria. They said they would meet the Zulu King and tribal chiefs to find a way to end escalating violence in South Africa's Zulu heartland (Reuters photo)

Mandela's peace bid gets mixed reviews

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela's new initiative to end the violence in Kwazulu-Natal received mixed reviews Tuesday as the president announced a second meeting in less than a week with Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini.

Mr. Mandela and Zulu nationalist leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi agreed for the first time Monday to jointly address an imbizo — a traditional Zulu gathering — in hopes of ending the undeclared civil war that has claimed more than 14,000 lives in the eastern province over the past decade.

A Mandela spokesman said the president would meet King Goodwill Thursday at one of the king's palaces in Kwazulu-Natal to discuss the imbizo and brief him on his meeting with Mr. Buthelezi, spokesman Parks Mankahlana told reporters.

King Goodwill and Mr. Buthelezi, who is the king's uncle as well as minister of home affairs in the Mandela government, had a political parting of ways after the country's first all-race elections in April 1994.

Mr. Mandela visited King Goodwill — who used to back Mr. Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) but now says he is above politics — Friday in the first of a series of meetings in his fresh bid to bring peace to Kwazulu-Natal.

The Mandela-Buthelezi agreement was widely hailed Tuesday as a positive step towards ending the bloody clashes between supporters of Mr. Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and Mr. Buthelezi's Zulu nationalist IFP.

The ANC termed the decision "extremely important," but a leading analyst of Zulu politics warned it may be too early for optimism.

Professor Alexander Johnston, head of political studies at the University of Natal in Durban, said the imbizo will help ease tensions in the province, but is unlikely to end the conflict overnight.

"The status of an imbizo is only a symbolic gathering of people and not a negotiating forum with a hard and fast agenda," he said. "Although this will allow the leaders to publicly demonstrate their commitment to peace, we cannot expect a substantive decision to come out of it."

Prof. Johnston pointed out that some of the sharpest divisions between Zulus were over ownership of traditional Zulu customs and traditions.

He said the three main players in the

province — the ANC, the IFP and the king — are competing over who has the right to interpret Zulu tradition.

The imbizo itself being a traditional Zulu institution, he said, there could be disagreement over how the event itself should be arranged and conducted.

Prof. Johnston said a joint security operation involving the forces of both the ANC-led central government and the IFP-dominated province would have far greater effect than just a public appearance by rival leaders.

"The best we can say about the proposed imbizo is that it is a first constructive step toward decreasing the tension in the province," he said.

King Goodwill's spokesman, Prince Sifiso Zulu, was also sceptical, warning that the imbizo could be undermined by "cheap politicking."

He was referring to statements by IFP spokesmen who said the imbizo was no more than a political ploy engineered by King Goodwill and the ANC.

A report by the Human Rights Commission, which has been monitoring violence in Kwazulu-Natal, said in a report released Tuesday that the number of deaths resulting from political violence had dropped nearly by half from 1,600 in 1994 to 837 last year.

But the commission noted that the toll had risen sharply in December, doubling the November figure to reach 76 — including a Christmas Day massacre of 19 ANC sympathizers, which appeared to have spurred the new peace initiative by Mr. Mandela.

The conservative National Party (NP), which had been the country's ruling party until Mr. Mandela was inaugurated as president in May 1994, was cautious in its praise for the initiative.

The NP spokesman for Kwazulu-Natal province, Jaco Maree, said he hoped the talks between the leaders of the parties involved in the conflict are successful and any decisions reached will be implemented at grass roots level.

"We (the NP) call on both the IFP and the ANC to come to grips with the situation that caused the violence," he said.

Mr. Maree said the leaders of both parties should "put an end to the double talk" and stop paying lip service to peace while the violence continued.

Diana in another storm after aide quits and nanny threatens suit

LONDON (AFP) — Princess Diana was at the eye of yet another storm Tuesday, with her last senior aide gone and her sons' nanny threatening to sue over an alleged sexual insult at a palace Christmas party.

The abrupt resignation Monday of long-time private secretary Patrick Jephson exacerbated and, some said, was linked to a remark Princess Diana made to Alexandra "Tiggy" Legge-Bourke at a palace staff party last month.

The attractive 30-year-old nanny is reported to have become the main woman in the lives of Princess Diana's sons, Princes William, 13, and Harry, 11, since Princess Diana and Prince Charles separated in 1992.

Tiggy is often pictured in the press cavorting with the boys and their father on holiday, and last year several tabloids ran a photo of Prince Charles kissing Tiggy affectionately on the cheek on an Alpine ski slope.

Princess Diana and Tiggy are not "BFs" — best friends, in London social-speak.

When rumours of the remark began leaking out, Tiggy hired top libel lawyer Peter Carter-Ruck to write to Princess Diana's lawyers demanding an apology. That triggered intense speculation about

exactly what she had said.

The only thing of which all royal watchers seemed sure was that it involved some sort of sexual slur that Princess Diana stage-whispered in Tiggy's ear as she glided past her table.

Richard Kay, the Daily Mail's authoritative royal watcher and a personal acquaintance of Princess Diana, reported that it consisted of seven words, beginning with, "so sorry."

"Tiggy did not really reply, except to respond incredulously, 'what...?'" Mr. Kay reported.

"She was helped into another room by Prince Charles' valet... and then, behind a closed door, she burst into tears."

The respective lawyers were not talking, and legal constraints prevented anyone else who had actually heard the remark from spilling the beans.

The tabloid, the Sun, without being more specific, termed Princess Diana's remark "a sex jibe" and "a groundless slur," "the final straw" that drove Mr. Jephson to abruptly quit as Princess Diana's private secretary and confidante, a post he had held since 1991.

The Daily Mirror said Mr. Jephson, who claimed to have left on an "amicable basis," had been enraged when he learned of Princess Diana's remark to Tiggy and stormed out,

saying, "I can't stand it any more."

Whatever Jephson's reasons for leaving, his departure was being seen as a severe blow to the princess in the midst of a maelstrom of domestic and marital strife.

Mr. Jephson was the second member of Princess Diana's senior staff to quit since her controversial BBC TV interview in November, in which she caused a storm by admitted adultery and cast aspersions on Prince Charles' capacity to be king.

That interview resulted in the sudden resignation of her press secretary, who had not been forewarned of the taping.

Princess Diana's mother-in-law, Queen Elizabeth II, wrote to both Prince Charles and Princess Diana last month, reportedly telling them in effect to stop dallying and get their inevitable divorce over with.

Princess Diana was meanwhile reported to be in continuing discussions with the palace over the terms of a divorce settlement and her post-divorce public role.

She said in the BBC interview she wanted to be a sort of roving ambassador for Britain, a "queen of people's hearts," which was not precisely the image being given her by Tuesday's tabloid press.

Gibson nominated for Directors Guild Award

LOS ANGELES (R) — Mel Gibson, winner of the Golden Globe for best director, was one of the five nominees announced Monday as contenders for the Directors Guild of America Award for outstanding directorial achievement. The nomination, for his work on the Paramount Pictures medieval battlefield epic Braveheart, came less than 24 hours after he won the Golden Globe for the same film, in which he also starred. If he wins the Directors Guild Award, Gibson is almost assured of taking filmdom's top prize, the Academy Award for directing. On only three occasions since 1949 has the guild winner failed to get the Oscar. Another actor-turned-director, Ron Howard, was nominated for the guild award Monday for Apollo 13, the true-life space drama from Universal Pictures. Other nominees were Mike Figgis for Leaving Las Vegas, Ang Lee for Sense and Sensibility, and Michael Radford for "Il Postino" (The Postman). Howard was previously nominated for Cocoon in 1986.

Alec Baldwin pleads not guilty

LOS ANGELES (R) — A lawyer for actor Alec Baldwin entered a not guilty plea Monday on behalf of the movie star, who is charged with battery for allegedly punching a photographer who tried to snap pictures of his wife Kim Basinger and their new-born daughter, Baldwin, 37, who faces up to six months in prison and a \$2,000 fine if convicted, was not in court. Since the charge is a misdemeanor he is not required to appear and remains free on his own recognisance. The incident occurred on Oct. 26, when Baldwin was driving his movie-star wife and their first baby, Ireland, from the hospital to their home in exclusive Woodland Hills. Freelance photographer Alan Zanger, who was parked outside the home and began taking pictures when the family drove up, claims Baldwin became enraged, sprayed his van windows with shaving cream, punched him and broke his nose. A trial was set for Feb. 22 after Baldwin's attorney Charles English pleaded not guilty in his behalf.

40,000 knives given up in British amnesty

LONDON (R) — A British amnesty called after a London headmaster was stabbed to death outside his school has netted almost 40,000 knives, police said Monday. Interior Minister Michael Howard told reporters: "The overwhelming response bears strong testament to the will of many of us to rid this country of violence. The result of the amnesty is that there are around 40,000 fewer chances of getting hurt from dangerous knives," he said.

China to rename Hong Kong border street

HONG KONG (AFP) — China plans to rename a street at the border with Hong Kong after it resumes sovereignty over the British colony on July 1, 1997, it was reported Saturday. Chung Ying Street (or Sino-British Street) in Shataukok at the eastern edge of the new territories, will be renamed Shen Gang Street (Shenzhen-Hong Kong Street), on the day of the handover. China-funded Ta Kung Pao daily quoted authoritative sources as saying. The report said an official ceremony to mark the name change of the once busy restricted border street would be held on July 1, 1997.

Mrs. Clinton to appear before U.S. grand jury

WASHINGTON (R) — First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton has been subpoenaed to testify before a federal grand jury about the sudden discovery of documents sought for two years by investigators probing the Whitewater affair, the White House said Monday.

The subpoena marked an embarrassing turn in the affair, which has dogged her husband's presidency and provided ammunition to his Republican foes as they seek to deny him reelection in November.

Mrs. Clinton will become the first wife of a serving president to be compelled to testify before a grand jury. The grand jury is thought by lawyers to be exploring whether there was any effort to obstruct justice in the handling of Hillary Clinton's long-missing billing records.

Mrs. Clinton and the president have denied any wrongdoing, and described the controversies swirling around her as driven purely by partisan politics.

Her summons before the panel was prompted by the Jan. 4 discovery of billing records from the 1980s, when Mrs. Clinton was a partner in a Little Rock law firm and her husband was Arkansas governor.

The records were found by the Clintons' director of personal correspondence, Carolyn Huber, who told the Senate Whitewater Committee last week that she stumbled across them last August in the "book room" on the third floor of the White House family quarters.

The records detail Mrs. Clinton's legal work in the mid-1980s for a failed Arkansas savings and loan owned by the Clintons' business partner in a real estate development called Whitewater.

Mrs. Clinton has said she was glad the files were found because they bear out her assertions of having done only minimal work for the thrift, Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, which failed at a cost of \$60 million to taxpayers.

At the time Ms. Huber found the records, an independent counsel and federal regulators had subpoenas for them dating back two years. The White House had claimed they could not be found and that the originals had disappeared from Mrs. Clinton's law firm.

Even after Ms. Huber found the records they were not turned over for five months, because she put them in a box and said she forgot about them until she reopened the box this month.

The first lady is to be questioned by the grand jury in Washington Friday along with three White House aides and the Clintons' private lawyers. Her appearance marks only an early fact-finding step and does not mean she is suspected of any crime or wrongdoing.

"As the first lady has always said, she is as eager as anyone to resolve questions regarding the billing records ... Friday's testimony will offer the first lady the opportunity to tell the independent counsel what she knows about these matters," associate White House counsel Mark Fabiani said.

President Bill Clinton's foes have compared Whitewater with Watergate, a coverup of a politically inspired burglary that forced Richard Nixon to become the first president to resign his office on Aug. 9, 1974.

Mrs. Clinton's public standing has plummeted following the latest developments in the Whitewater affair and a controversy over her role in firing White House travel office staff in May 1993.

The president's chief of staff said Sunday that a Republican congressional inquiry into Mrs. Clinton's role in the Whitewater matter was getting dangerously close to "political harassment."

Dole seeks to bar U.N. from levying taxes

WASHINGTON (R) — Senate Republican leader Bob Dole introduced a bill Monday to bar U.S. payments to the United Nations if it tries to implement a tax plan to raise money.

"For years, United Nations bureaucrats and their allies in special interest groups and academia have dreamed about funding the United Nations through global taxes and other schemes," Sen. Dole said in a Senate speech.

"Tax collecting would allow the United Nations to do what it pleases, not what its member states wanted," he said.

Sen. Dole's bill was prompted by a speech last week by U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali summing up proposals made by various member states on how to raise money for the nearly bankrupt world body.

Measures for consideration could include a fee on speculative international financial transactions, a levy on fossil fuels or its resulting pollution, earmarking a small portion of anticipated decline in world military expenditures, a stamp tax on international travel and travel documents or a levy on global currency transactions, Dr. Ghali said.

Sen. Dole said it was far from certain that the United States could stop any such money-raising scheme.

His bill would state that the U.N. had no authority to tax U.S. citizens and would bar U.S. payments to the world body if it tried to impose any of the taxation plans. The bill would cut off funds for any U.N. organization that developed or advocated taxation schemes.

The bill is co-sponsored by Republican Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms of North Carolina, who said he planned to hold hearings on the bill. A similar measure was being introduced in the House of Representatives.

Simpson starts answering questions under oath

LOS ANGELES (R) — O.J. Simpson sometimes spoke just above a whisper in his first sworn testimony about events surrounding the murders of his ex-wife and her friend, but one attorney said he heard enough to know Simpson was lying.

Nearly four months after his acquittal, the former American football star, sometime actor and television personality sat down Monday in a west Los Angeles law office and began answering questions under oath in a wrongful-death civil lawsuit brought against him by the victims' families.

It was his first face-to-face showdown with opposing lawyers. He opted not to take the witness stand during his year-long criminal trial. The case ended with a jury clearing him of the June 12, 1994, murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

Subdued and at times speaking so softly that he could barely be heard, Simpson was grilled for several hours by the Goldmans' lead attorney, Daniel Petrocelli, according to a lawyer who was present for the much-anticipated deposition.

In the first in a series of closed-door interrogations, Simpson was questioned about the June 17, 1994, car chase in which he led police down the freeway in a white Bronco before surrendering at his Brentwood mansion, according to Michael Brewer, attorney for Goldman's mother, Sharon Rufo.



Workers clean ice around a barge grounded on a parking lot at the bank of the Allegheny River in downtown Pittsburgh. The barge shifted towards the river Monday revealing eight more cars it had crushed. City officials are not sure how they are going to dislodge the barge, which was hung up on a guard rail during the weekend's flooding (Reuter photo)

Washington battles snow, floods and dead fish

WASHINGTON (R) — Residents of the U.S. capital, recently battered by blizzards and swamped with snow, faced a further trial by weather Monday after areas of the city were swamped by the flooding Potomac River.

Commuters faced traffic chaos because major roads were submerged. Pedestrians stepped through icy mud and over dead fish to get to work in areas of Georgetown and historic old town Alexandria.

Weather officials said the river crested at some seven feet (two metres) above flood level, swamping properties in some of the capital's ritziest districts.

At Washington Harbour, a complex of offices, restaurants and apartments overlooking the river in Georgetown, floodgates held back the swollen waters.

The street in front was closed to traffic as clean-up crews brushed brown slush from sidewalks with brooms and pumped water out of an underground garage.

People arriving for work held on to pillars and to the sides of buildings to manoeuvre over slippery ground.

The Kennedy Centre and the Watergate Hotel and complex — scene of the infamous break-in which brought about the downfall of President Richard Nixon — were unaffected.

Kennedy Centre performances were to go on as scheduled Monday evening, including a lecture by former President George

Bush and his wife Barbara.

"It's ugly, a mess," said George Galt, an attorney on his way to work. "It's surprising to see what the water can do," he said, pointing to a stretch of brick walkway that had buckled where water had eroded the ground beneath.

Georgetown restaurants struggled to stay open. The Sequoia, an upscale eatery in Washington Harbour, expected a limited number of walk-ins at lunch but dinner was expected to be unaffected.

Tim Dorney, who works at the restaurant, advocated care. "It's muddy, it's ice, if you're not slipping on the mud, you're slipping on the ice," he said.

Across the river in old town Alexandria, ducks swam around stranded cars in riverside streets. Sandbags protected doors to stores and restaurants as debris floated by.

Route 1 from Virginia into Washington turned into a commuter's nightmare as rush-hour traffic ground to a halt.

For some people, the floods were the final straw, breaking their patience after weeks of interruption caused by record snowstorms, a deep freeze and two federal government shutdowns caused by a political budget fight.

"It's annoying, you just can't get any work done this whole month — the snow and now this," moaned a woman in Georgetown as she trod warily to work.

3 Indian ministers formally charged with corruption

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) formally charged three former members of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's cabinet with corruption Tuesday.

The federal detective agency filed corruption charges against former Human Resource Development Minister Madhav Rao Scindia, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vidya Charan Shukla and Agriculture Minister Bal Ram Jakhar with a court here.

The list of charges against the ministers, who resigned from the cabinet last week, was not immediately released by the Tis Hazari Court handling the worst corruption scandal in India since independence.

The ministers have denied accepting money from a businessman, Surendra Jain, who allegedly made payments to at least 115 politicians and bureaucrats between 1988 and 1991.

Seven opposition politicians were charged in connection with the case last week, including Lal Krishna Advani, the president of

the main opposition party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party).

Mr. Advani has rejected the charges and his party stepped up its attack on Prime Minister Rao Tuesday saying his attempt to use the corruption scandal to win votes would "boomerang" on his Congress (I) Party.

BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee fired the first broadside by ridiculing a claim by a Congress spokesman that the 74-year-old prime minister was "Mr. Clean."

Mr. Vajpayee, a candidate for prime minister if the BJP wins a general election expected in April, alleged that Mr. Rao was trying to cover-up his involvement in the bribery case.

Mr. Vajpayee reiterated charges first made last week that Mr. Rao had received money from Mr. Jain and urged the Supreme Court to look into the allegations.

Mr. Vajpayee released excerpts from what he said was a 35-page statement made by Mr. Jain to CBI.

Yeltsin vows to crush Chechen rebel bases

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin Tuesday vowed that Chechen rebel bases would be "crushed," a day after announcing that he would probably run for reelection in June.

"Our position is well known: Patient dialogue with all those ready to hold political talks and of course the crushing of terrorist bases, the elimination of the armed groups and their leaders," Mr. Yeltsin told the new Federation Council, the upper house of parliament, at its opening session.

He accused the Chechen separatists led by Dzhokhar Dudayev of "arrogantly trying to dictate their terms (hiding) behind the backs of their hostages, women and children."

Mr. Yeltsin called for a minute's silence in the chamber for "the soldiers and civilians who fell victim to (Chechen) terrorism."

Last week Russian forces unleashed a grueling and ferocious four-day assault on Chechen rebels holed up in the Daghestani village of Pervomaiskaya near Chechnya with more than 100 hostages.

A group of the rebels managed to flee the border village with several dozen hostages under heavy bombardment.

Their leader Salman Raduyev said Monday some 82 hostages taken to Chechnya from Daghestan during the assault would be released only in return for guerrillas taken prisoner by the Russians, not uncondi-

tionally as earlier promised.

A senior Russian military official told Interfax News Agency Tuesday that about 180 Chechen rebels had been killed in Pervomaiskaya.

Earlier Mr. Yeltsin said 153 rebels had been killed in the assault and 30 taken prisoner, while 26 Russian troops died.

He said 24 hostages were killed and 82 freed in the assault, which involved intense bombardments with helicopter gunships and multiple rocket launchers.

Mr. Yeltsin Tuesday praised the Moscow-backed Chechen leader Doku Zavgayev, elected in the breakaway Caucasus republic in December polls which were marked by irregularities and boycotted by the separatists.

The elections "were clear proof that most Chechens wanted the restoration of normal life, peace and order," said Mr. Yeltsin.

Peace talks with Chechen separatist representatives were suspended last October after a bomb attack in the Chechen capital Grozny which left General Anatoly Romanov, then commander of Russian troops in Chechnya, critically wounded.

Russian troops stormed into Chechnya in December 1994 to crush Mr. Dudayev's independence bid.

Mr. Yeltsin's handling of the Chechnya crisis, widely criticised by parliament deputies and the Russian media, has raised new doubts about his chances for reelection in the June 16



Russian President Boris Yeltsin applauds after finishing his speech of the new Federation Council upper house of the parliament on Tuesday. Mr. Yeltsin, who suffered two mild heart attacks last year said he wanted to recover more strength before entering Russia's presidential race (Reuter photo)

presidential polls.

Some observers have viewed the crackdown on Chechen rebels as a further sign that Mr. Yeltsin is seeking to win over a public despondent at the inconclusive Chechnya war and outgun Communists and nationalists who scored significantly better in the December parliamentary elections than the government bloc Our Home Is Russia.

Mr. Yeltsin announced Monday that he would probably run for reelection in June, but would make his final decision on February 13-15.

"I've got to get a bit stronger," he told Interfax Tuesday.

Mr. Yeltsin, who turns 65

next month, was hospitalised for a condition restricting blood flow to the heart on Oct. 26 — his second bout of heart trouble in four months — and spent two months convalescing.

In another development, the Kremlin called on the Council of Europe to admit Russia as a member, saying a rejection would "be tantamount to support — albeit indirect — for those who are trying to resolve the Chechnya problem through inhumane and terrorist methods."

The council's Parliamentary Assembly is due to gather in Strasbourg Thursday to consider Russia's request to become the pan-European body's 39th member state.

Hijacked ferry returns; Chechens to free captives

NOVOGROZNSKY, Russia (R) — Rebel Chechen fighters were set to free up to 50 captives Tuesday, hours after a ship held by Chechen supporters for almost a week on the Black Sea arrived back in a Russian port.

The hijack in the Turkish port of Trabzon was the first time rebel fighters had taken their struggle for independence outside Russia's borders and the second hostage-taking in a week.

The first, in Russia's autonomous region of Dagestan, ended in bloodshed when Russian troops stormed the village where the captives were being held.

The Chechens have promised to free some civilians seized in that raid, which began on Jan. 9, Tuesday and rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev is expected to announce a ban on attacks against civilian targets.

It was not immediately clear if all the rebels would abide by Mr. Dudayev's order or if Russia or Dagestan would agree to

release the bodies of Chechen fighters killed in the bloody assault — which the rebels appear to be seeking.

ITAR-TASS news agency, quoting Dagestan Interior Ministry officials, said only that there would be talks in the Chechen rebel-held town of Novogroznensky Tuesday to deal with "the mechanisms and details" of a hostage release.

Salman Raduyev, leader of the "Lone Wolf" rebels who seized around 2,000 hostages in the Dagestan town of Kizlyar on Jan. 9 and then fled to Pervomaiskoye, came out of hiding Monday to defend his action.

"We were forced to do it by the Russian authorities, to defend our dignity as men," Mr. Raduyev told reporters at a secret location in Chechnya where some of the hostages were being held.

"I repeat that we will fight till the last drop of blood."

On Tuesday rebel fighters and their supporters crowded outside the headquarters of Chechen Commander-In-

Chief Aslan Maskhadov in Novogroznensky, some 50 kilometres from the regional capital Grozny, to wait for any hostage release.

Some of the 300 wore green Islamic headbands and many carried Kalashnikov assault rifles slung over their shoulders.

Movladi Udugov, a spokesman for rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, had invited reporters to witness the release.

Mr. Raduyev said his rebels took 83 hostages with them when they broke out of Pervomaiskoye after being surrounded and bombarded by Russian forces. They included 53 civilians, six of them women, and police commandos.

Mr. Udugov said the police commandos would be treated as prisoners of war and freed only in a swap for captured rebels.

A ban on civilian hostage-takings would appear to rule out a repeat of the crisis in Pervomaiskoye and a hostage seizure in the southern Russian town of Budennovsk last June. Both episodes led to civilian

casualties.

The boat hijack ended without bloodshed last Friday when the nine gunmen gave themselves up to Turkish authorities. They are due to be charged by the end of this month.

The 3,838-tonne Avrasya was one of several "shop-tour" vessels sailing the Black Sea. Russians return laden with cheap consumer goods, some of which are hard to find at home, after a frenetic spending spree.

The hijacking was greeted with understanding if not outright support by many Turks, while Russia complained Ankara was not doing enough to end the ordeal.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has faced criticism for his handling of the crisis in Dagestan. He has acknowledged that 27 Russian soldiers were killed and more than 100 rebels escaped, but has defended the storming of Pervomaiskoye as a successful operation that freed 82 out of about 100 hostages.

Probe forces scientists to rethink Jupiter theories

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. (R) — The Galileo probe that penetrated Jupiter's hostile atmosphere found very strong winds but little water, forcing scientists to rethink their theories of the planet's formation, NASA said.

Researchers at NASA's Ames Research Centre in Mountain View released the first information about a stream of data sent back by the Galileo probe, which descended into Jupiter's atmosphere in December before burning up under the intense heat and pressure.

NASA scientists said the probe's 57-minute descent mission had provided a series of startling discoveries.

Probe instruments found the entry region of Jupiter to be dryer than anticipated and they did not detect the three-tiered cloud structure that most researchers had expected.

The amount of helium measured was about one-half of what was expected,

researchers said. These initial findings are encouraging scientists to rethink their theories of Jupiter's formation and the nature of planetary evolution processes, probe project scientist Richard Young said.

"The quality of the Galileo probe data exceeds all of our most optimistic predictions," Wesley Huntress, NASA's associate administrator for space science, said. "It will allow the scientific community to develop valuable new insights into the formation and evolution of our solar system, and the origins of life within it."

The probe, released by the Galileo spacecraft, entered Jupiter's atmosphere last Dec. 7, surviving entry speeds of over 106,000 mph (170,000 kph) and intensely hot temperatures.

It relayed data back to the Galileo Orbiter more than 209,000 kilometres overhead, for storage and transmission back to Earth.

The probe detected extremely strong winds and very intense turbulence during its descent through Jupiter's thick atmosphere, researchers said.

It also discovered an intense new radiation belt about 50,000 kilometres above Jupiter's cloud tops and a lack of the expected lightning.

The probe found no data to suggest the presence of water clouds of any significance. Previous observations had suggested Jupiter had water-abundance in its atmosphere of between two and 10 times the solar level.

But actual probe measurements suggest a level near that of the sun, scientists said.

The data sent back by Galileo represents the culmination of a nearly 20-year programme aimed at learning about the gigantic Jovian system, which could reveal important clues about the formation and evolution of the solar system.

During its six-year jour-

ney, Galileo has survived the failure of its high-gain antenna to unfurl properly in April 1991 and problems with a tape recorder and a stuck fuel valve.

In July, the Jupiter probe separated from the Galileo spacecraft and hurtled off on a suicide mission to Jupiter, entering its hostile atmosphere five months later.

The Galileo craft itself went into orbit around Jupiter, becoming the first spacecraft to enter orbit around one of the solar system's giant outer planets.

During the next two years, Galileo will make at least 11 orbits of the giant planet, which has more than 300 times the mass of Earth, and will have close encounters with three of Jupiter's largest moons, Ganymede, Callisto and Europa.

Galileo is expected to run out of fuel and eventually burn up around December 1997.

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High hopes and need of the day

IRAQ'S APPARENT readiness to discuss with the U.N. the terms of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 986, under which Baghdad would be able to sell \$1 billion worth of oil every three months to buy food and medicine, is the first sign ever that the two sides wish to find an acceptable compromise to end the suffering of the Iraqi people. So far the Iraqi regime rejected Resolution 986 because it presumably compromised the sovereignty of the country by placing conditions and restrictions on how the state would conduct business. The Iraqi government has long insisted that the U.N. terms for oil sale are neither necessary nor related to the ultimate purpose of the oil-for-food formula.

Now it is up to U.N. secretary general, Boutros Ghali and the Iraqi government to reach an amicable solution to this dimension of the deal in a manner which is consistent with the aims and purposes of Resolution 986. This also means that Baghdad should be more forthright about its intention to implement the resolution and the U.N. more reasonable with its terms for putting the resolution into effect in the shortest possible time. Unwarranted conditions or burdensome restrictions on the oil deal should be replaced by sensible terms that are appropriate and consistent with the desire of all the parties to help the needy and sick Iraqis.

An agreement between Baghdad and the U.N. on this issue could be just the necessary opening for the rehabilitation of Iraq into the international community. When the Iraqis are no longer hungry and sick, they will be in a better position to turn their attention to matters on the top of which is of course the introduction of pluralistic democracy and the respect for human rights. That is why all sides have a vested interest in the success of the projected talks between the U.N. and Iraq.

Arabic Press Commentaries

A GLANCE at the list of winners in the Palestinian elections reveals that candidates who were most prominent in the opposition camp got the greatest number of votes, said Mohammad Kawash, a writer for Al Dustour. An examining look at the list also reveals that the faith members who are firmly committed to their cause and constituting an opposition group to Yasser Arafat have reaped the fruit of their stand and received high marks. The elections have also revealed that the voters enjoy a great measure of political awareness by electing prominent women who aim at bringing about political, social and economic reforms and are determined to work side by side with men to achieve the Palestinian people's aspirations. It is regrettable to see the list of winners void of any Hamas members simply because Hamas and the other opposition groups refrained from participating in the elections said the writer. By so doing, said the writer, Hamas and its allies have lost a historic opportunity of winning seats in the coming council where they can better air their views and contribute more significantly towards building up the Palestinian nation.

A WRITER in Al Rai urged the security authorities to speed up investigations into the fire which engulfed the headoffice of the Jordanian Veterinarian Association two days ago, ruining not only the furniture but also the official files and the computer that held the list of the registered members. Nazih said that coming after the veterinarians' general assembly's decision to freeze the membership of 42 per cent of the association members for failing to pay their dues, the fire could have been an act of sabotage. It is not possible for the association board to tell now which members had paid up their dues and their annual subscriptions and those who did not, and so the fire has created a real problem to the association board and the association members at large, added the writer. The investigations will soon reveal whether it was arson or a mere incident caused by an electric circuit and could point to the suspects in the case and their motives, but the results can by no means help the association to recover its balance. Should the investigations prove that the fire was an act of sabotage, added the writer, the association should turn its attention to helping the concerned authorities find the criminals.

NATO is looking south and Mideast peace stands to gain

By Jerrold D. Green, F. Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser

SANTA MONICA, California — NATO's member states have begun to look southward. Focusing on six "dialogue states" — Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel and Jordan — NATO's new Mediterranean initiative is more complex and perhaps more far-reaching than many realise.

The role that this effort could play in stabilising relations across the Mediterranean and the Middle East is potentially quite powerful.

Any view of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as a security arrangement made obsolete by the end of the cold war is outmoded. For the leadership has come to realise that security arrangements are untenable without political, economic and social concomitants.

Relations among the littoral states of the Mediterranean are tense. The North African states want economic development. Their European neighbours to the

north want to keep migration and security risks at bay. NATO, correctly, wants to help. In doing so it is underlining a new geopolitical reality: the old distinctions between European and Middle Eastern security have evaporated.

All sides recognise a problem, none has the answer. Yet NATO's recognition that dialogue with these troubled states is a prerequisite to resolution of the problem is laudable. All relevant states have a vested interest both in regional security and in the internal stability of the dialogue states themselves. As a security organisation, NATO can be most effective by preventing conflicts from breaking out in the first place, rather than by trying to affect them once they have begun.

Just such an anticipatory role is needed before conflict erupts on the two sides of the Mediterranean or the dialogue falls between Israel and Syria.

A NATO-sponsored dialogue that includes both Israel and Syria has a great deal to recommend it. NATO's 16 member states will have a highly public

and visible stake in supporting and even enhancing the Arab-Israeli peace effort.

And any security arrangements between Israel and Syria will have the added benefit of helping to promote a wider, regional strategic understanding that includes virtually all leading actors around the Mediterranean.

Expanded outreach by NATO to the south will not lead to Marshall Plan, but it could promote the types of security and regional understanding that would be essential to the future.

Suspensions will have to be overcome in Arab states fearful of closer involvement with NATO members, some of which once colonised the states involved in the current dialogue. Old anti-Western attitudes especially in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, persist in many quarters. Ill-judged theorising about a "clash of civilisations" has made matters worse.

But times change, as do attitudes. And now that NATO is headed by a former Spanish foreign minister, Javier Solana, its dia-

logue with potential Mediterranean partners may intensify. Morocco is closer to Europe than it is to the Fertile Crescent, and Israel and Syria have everything to gain and little to lose from reaching an understanding with one another.

As NATO looks southward, it can play a positive role on two fronts. It can help stabilise north-south relations across the Mediterranean. It can also bring its expertise and credibility to bear in confidence building between the remaining adversaries in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Above all, it can make an Israeli-Syrian peace more attractive by providing a link to a wider, trans-Atlantic security system spanning old regional boundaries. In political terms, at least, the distance from Damascus to Brussels is getting shorter everyday.

The writers are senior members of the International Policy Department at the Rand Corporation. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

The prodigal returns — Yugoslavia bids to rejoin world

By James Flannery

Reuters

Belgrade — Punished and isolated by global trade sanctions now fading away, rump Yugoslavia is today a prodigal state seeking to regain a place in the international community.

Yugoslavia fell apart in Balkan turmoil and virtually dropped off the world map.

Once acclaimed for apparent ethnic harmony, the one-time Communist but non-aligned leader and cold war power-broker, disintegrated on the withdrawal of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Macedonia in 1991-92.

An outcast is returning after the 43-month Bosnian war with promises of reform and new directions, instead of warrior nationalism that outraged many abroad.

Yugoslavia is reaching out for friends after enduring the Balkan war crisis with few sympathisers outside Russia and regional states such as Greece.

The Bosnian war, over Belgrade-sponsored Serb separatism, caused 200,000 deaths and displaced three million people in Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

The Serbian government, declaring that Yugoslavia is

returning to world markets, says sanctions cost the country \$150 billion.

Now European integration is a current beacon for Yugoslavs disillusioned by the splinter effects of ultra-nationalism.

"We are Europe, this is Europe" people here tell visitors. Naming virtually any other nearby state, Belgraders add scornfully: "We are not like them."

It is hard, though, to equate this quintessentially Balkan state with the very different political and social cultures of the Western European countries with which it seeks links.

Misunderstanding and ignorance of the Balkans in European Union capitals was one reason for the EU's ineffectual attempts to mediate, although Britain and France remained broadly sympathetic to Belgrade during the war.

Once branded by a U.S. State Department official as a potential war crimes suspect, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic is draped in peacemaker laurels as a co-sponsor of the Bosnian peace accords.

"Our aim is integration into Europe and the world — equal cooperation with everyone," says Mr. Milosevic who has won Western praise for arm-twisting

rebel Bosnian Serbs into line.

One problem may delay entry to international institutions. Abroad questions remain about Belgrade's human rights record in the province of Kosovo where an ethnic Albanian majority population is ruled under a severe clampdown.

In this transitional era, there is much talk of a "magic wand" to transform the war-exhausted economy by a big privatisation programme.

Yugoslavia, now comprising just Serbia and Montenegro, still has many state industrial monopolies and lags behind eastern Europe in economic liberalisation.

Hints emerge in the state-controlled media of an internal shakeup. The pro-government daily Politika has talked of a likely political purge — described as "personnel refreshment for new policies".

It says a powerful new crime-fighting squad called "the untouchables" has been ordered to crack down on high-level embezzlement and theft feeding off a war-distorted economy.

Isolation had helped to breed executive crime, it says.

"Milosevic wants his people to turn to the future, which means forgetting the

past, and wants the international community to accept him as a respectable partner," says one Belgrade press commentator.

Newspapers log the changes daily. Investment flows in, cross-border trade resumes and diplomats are exchanged. All this is news in a country that had no international flights until a few months ago and where credit cards are useless.

China, itself a former outcast, has promised full support for Yugoslavia's global rehabilitation — this was the chief fruit of a Beijing visit by Yugoslav President Zoran Lilic.

Perhaps the biggest unknown is a psychological change in people that may take years.

Academic and writer Latinka Perovic says: "Any peace is better than war, but it does not eliminate responsibility for war. Without the understanding of that — truth, there is no return to the world."

"Our maturity," she told a radio audience in an attack on pan-Serb nationalism, "will be tested by our capability to learn from the defeat of an archaic project and such dangerous politics."

Lebanon surprises Israel with opening gambit

By Andrew Tarnowski

Reuters

Beirut — As resumption of peace talks between Lebanon and Israel nears, Beirut has surprised Israel with an opening gambit that heralds hard bargaining when their negotiators eventually meet.

By issuing an arrest warrant on capital charges against General Antoine Lahd, commander of Israel's client militia in south Lebanon, Beirut has sent a message that it will not compromise in peace talks over the fate of Mr. Lahd and his 3,000 men who have helped Israel hold a border strip since 1985.

Last week's warrant accused Mr. Lahd of forming a hostile army, collaborating with the enemy, stripping off territory from the state and murdering and kidnapping Lebanese citizens.

Political analysts in Beirut say the move is a bid to preempt any discussion in peace negotiations of Israel's demands for safety guarantees for Mr. Lahd and integration of his South Lebanon Army (SLA) into the Lebanese army.

The Lebanese army took in sectarian militiamen in the aftermath of the 1975-90 civil war but the move against Mr. Lahd indicates that this is not on the cards for him and his men.

"The aim... is to stop Israel from raising the subject of the SLA's fate and having its settlement as part of a future peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel," the Beirut daily Al-Nahar quoted a diplomat as saying of the arrest warrant.

If Israel does raise the issue, Lebanon's negotiators will simply say Mr. Lahd is subject to legal process and his situation cannot be negotiated, the analysts say.

Driving the point home, President Elias Hrawi, a Maronite Christian like Mr. Lahd, was quoted last week as saying Lebanon rejects Israel's demand to reintegrate the SLA into its army.

If there is no compromise, Israel could face the unpleasant choice of abandoning an ally who has served loyally under fire for 10 years on the last active Arab-Israeli frontline, or abandoning hope of a settlement with Lebanon.

It will be a major obstacle to the peace negotiations and there will probably be no settlement if it is not solved, an analyst said.

"It's a clever move by the Lebanese but I don't know

if it's going to work, because Israel definitely wants guarantees for the SLA. It's not going to let them down," he said.

"This is more important than territory in the eyes of the Israelis. It's a matter of ethics and morality. They always stress the moral issue of being loyal to their friends and they showed this in regard to Palestinian collaborators."

It is equally important for Beirut. The government, intent on restoring state authority, cannot let Mr. Lahd go unpunished. The army, which has been trying for five years to rebuild as a credible force after breaking into sectarian factions during the war, cannot take in his men.

Apparently unworried, Mr. Lahd told Reuters last week at his home in the border zone, which comprises 11 per cent of Lebanon's territory, he would ignore the arrest warrant.

He argued that by helping Israel control the zone he had acted as a true Lebanese, protecting it from a far harsher occupation and enabling 150,000 inhabitants to stay in their homes.

But the day after the warrant was issued Mr. Lahd rushed to Jerusalem for talks with Prime Minister Shimon Peres who immediately warned Lebanon there could be no real peace negotiations unless it stopped persecuting Mr. Lahd.

"My confidence in the Israeli commitments (to the safety of the SLA) is very strong," Mr. Lahd said on his return.

If a compromise can be reached, it will probably exclude Mr. Lahd and 30 to 100 senior SLA officers and aides. Beirut sees them as traitors and they will either have to go abroad or be taken in by Israel for their protection, another analyst said.

If these men stayed in Lebanon they would be hunted both by the authorities and by the pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) whose guerrillas attack Israeli and SLA troops almost daily.

But junior officers and men, who could not avoid conscription into the SLA and only obeyed orders, are referred to by some Lebanese commentators as simply misguided.

"They will probably be amnestied but that does not mean they will be reintegrated into the Lebanese army," the analyst said.

LETTERS

No unjust uprooting

To the Editor:

OVER THE past few decades, we in Jordan have tried to make environmental conservation a national as well as individual responsibility and have been rewarded by witnessing an increase in the number of environmental activists. Those concerned citizens have played an invaluable and commendable advocacy role, alerting the Jordanian public to potentially damaging practices, and contributing to shaping our public policies.

Recently, the construction project for the Jubilee School campus has generated concern among some regarding its environmental impact. It is indeed ironic that the Jubilee School, whose curriculum incorporates environmental studies to foster awareness among its students, and which serves to train school teachers from throughout the country in issues of environmental sensitivity — should give rise to exaggerated rumours.

From its inception, the Jubilee School project was designed to allow students and staff to derive maximum enjoyment and inspiration from this invigorating site. The project was carefully designed, from the outset, to take into account environmental factors, especially the location of trees on the site. The possibility of uprooting and replanting trees instead of cutting them has also been thoroughly explored.

Unfortunately, this is feasible only for the smaller ones, but not the older, bigger trees because of their widespread roots and the rocky nature of the earth. It is inevitable that a certain number of trees will have to be cut down, but only when absolutely necessary to accommodate buildings, many of which have been designed to incorporate

trees in their plans. Based on our request, the project architects are also continuously adjusting and altering the plans for outdoors elements, such as paths, benches and parking areas, in order to save as many trees as possible.

We believe that we have come up with a reasonable plan which strikes a sustainable balance between environmental protection and national development. The Jubilee School construction plans have always entailed the provision of replacing trees that must be removed at a ratio of more than two to one.

We would like to commend the spirit of activism and concern for the environment among Jordanians and we hope that action for environmental protection will always be based on systematic and responsible coordination and consultation among all concerned parties.

The Steering Committee of the Jubilee School,
Amman.

Features

Doing business with the world: Excavations reveal urban evolution, trading links of early Islamic Aqaba

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

CAVATION IN 1993 and 1995 at ancient Ayla (Aqaba) have clarified two important aspects of the earliest Islamic urbanism during the 7th-10th centuries AD — the development of the town plan in the wake of Roman-Byzantine urban traditions, and the trans-continental trading network that linked Ayla with ports as far away as West Africa, China, Iraq, Persia and East Africa. The site of Ayla has been excavated since 1986 by a team sponsored by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute and headed by Dr Donald Whitcomb, in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities. The excavations have confirmed the history of the ancient city, which lasted around 450 years. It was founded around 650 AD (south-east of the earlier Roman-Byzantine town), flourished as a trading port through the Umayyad (661-750 AD) and Abbasid (750-969 AD) periods, and declined gradually during the Fatimid period (969-1171 AD); it suffered a serious earthquake in 1068, and was sacked by the Crusader Baldwin I of Jerusalem in 1164 AD.

The new early Islamic city founded around 650 AD was a rectangle that measured some 170 x 145 metres, and was surrounded by a 2.6-metre-thick stone city wall with four gates and a series of towers. The four gates gave onto main streets that met in the centre of the city at a tetrapylon, or four-sided covered arch that formed the intersection of two major streets (similar to the one at the north end of Jerusalem). The initial city plan resembled a typical late Roman legionary fortress, but soon after evolved to reflect the urban ideas of the new Islamic culture. Ayla was a misr (plural: amsar), one of the new early Islamic towns that were founded immediately after the first Islamic conquests, usually adjacent to earlier Roman and Byzantine towns. This is the case at Aqaba, as well as at Fustat (Cairo), Istakhr (Iran), and other places in the Middle East. Ayla may be the

best preserved misr known today, and thus may clarify aspects of early Islamic urbanism that have never been well documented elsewhere.

The pre-Islamic Byzantine town had already entered the Islamic sphere in 630, when the town's Christian bishop Yuhanna Ibn Ru'ba made a treaty with the Prophet Muhammad to secure the town's safety. The Caliph Umar visited that town (called Aila or Aelana) in 638, the same year that the Muslim forces won the Battle of Yarmouk in north Jordan and swept into the Levant. The Byzantine town at Aqaba was not sacked because it submitted to the Islamic forces, and after 650 AD it continued to exist alongside the new Islamic town that was established virtually adjacent to it. (The Roman-Byzantine town has been recently identified and is being excavated by another American-led team).

The Abbasid mosque

The 1993 season was most noteworthy for clarifying the configuration and role of the single largest building on the site, a 28 x 50-metre structure that has now been identified as the congregational mosque. The mosque comprised a broad courtyard with a peristyle colonnade set on plastered piers around all three surviving sides (the fort, east, side of the mosque no longer exists, having been washed away by the wadi that now cuts through the site). A double row of columns on the south-west side held up the mosque's partial roof. The mihrab (direction of prayer niche) in the centre of the south-west wall does not point directly towards Mecca, as was common in the early Islamic period.

This mosque was built in the Abbasid period, probably soon after the earthquake of 748 AD; it is the largest and best preserved Abbasid mosque in Jordan. It was the centre of prayer for the town and also served as an important centre of theological scholarship and hadith studies (the experiences of the life of the Prophet). Among the



A view of the latest excavations at Aqaba, looking south towards the sea; visible at bottom right of photo are some of the walls remains from buildings around the colonnaded street (Photo courtesy of Don Whitcomb/University of Chicago)

prominent students of the erudite Al Zahri at Aqaba were 'Uqayl Ibn Khalid and Yunis Ibn Yazid, Dr Whitcomb told the Jordan Times in a recent interview in Amman.

The excavations found evidence of glass tesserae and fragments of gold foil from around the mihrab area, reflecting Syrian rather than Abbasid/Iraqi traditions in mosque decoration. Walls partially visible beneath the mosque suggest the existence of an earlier structure, probably the Umayyad period mosque; this will have to await future excavations to be clarified.

Ayla's ceramics industry

The 1993 season uncovered two pottery kilns in an area outside the city walls, towards the north-west in the area between the Islamic and Byzantine towns. Over three metres in diameter, these large updraft kilns produced, among other things, tall amphora jars that were specialised containers used to ship commodities by sea. The discovery of these two kilns

and reports of over a dozen others from local residents indicate that the Aqaba ceramics industry produced large quantities of amphorae. These were needed to meet the needs of the thriving trade system in the region in the early Islamic period, when Aqaba was strategically situated between the Islamic heartland in the Hijaz and areas of Islamic expansion in the Levant and North Africa.

Goods sent to Aqaba by land from Syria, Palestine and perhaps even Egypt were repacked in amphorae for their sea journeys to Arabia, East Africa and other destinations. Some of the commodities that were shipped out of Aqaba included grains, oils, fruits and nuts. Aqaba amphorae have been found in excavations at Qana (near Aden) and at the towns of Adulis and Axum in the ancient Axumite kingdom (a Hellenistic/Roman/Byzantine culture located in present day Eritrea and Ethiopia). Axumite coins have been excavated at Aqaba, further strengthening the evidence of established trade systems throughout the Red Sea area, whose economies

expanded briskly during the early Islamic centuries.

Another interesting trade route was evidenced by the discovery at Ayla of a hoard of gold dinar coins probably minted at Sijilmasa, in south Morocco at the edge of the Sahara desert. The coins mostly bear the name of Hisham II who ruled Spain in 976-1013; they may have been carried by a Moroccan pilgrim en route to Mecca. Historical sources recount that the North African pilgrimage caravan was attacked at Ayla by local bedouin in 1024, and these coins may be evidence of that unfortunate incident. They are further evidence of the trade routes that linked the Middle East and North Africa in the Abbasid period. Ceramics and other material evidence also proves that Aqaba traded with ports in Iraq, Persia, the Indian Ocean and China during the Abbasid and Fatimid periods.

1995 season clarifies urban evolution

The 1995 season concentrated on excavating the areas immediately around

the Abbasid mosque, with the aim of clarifying the earliest history of the city soon after its founding around 650 AD. Much of the very earliest urban architecture is hard to study because over the centuries the city has been slowly sinking into the ground, due to the impact of repeated earthquakes. The excavations in the wadi near the mosque revealed four metres of stratified ancient occupation, with over two metres of Umayyad stratification beneath later levels from the Abbasid and Fatimid periods. About one metre of Umayyad occupation was found sunken into the water table in the wadi.

Just east of the mosque the excavators cleared a semi-circular tower of the city wall, which will be restored soon so that it can be viewed by people walking along the cornice. Within the city walls was a series of rooms that faced a 15-metre-wide street with colonnades on both sides, and another series of rooms lined the other (north-west) side of the street. The street itself was paved with pink crushed sandstone, but is poorly preserved because it

has been covered by the wadi for centuries. (The wadi was probably formed by an earthquake, perhaps in 748 or 1068; a preserved historical account from the 1068 earthquake recounts that "the earth swallowed the city" during that tremor, perhaps indicating that parts of the city collapsed into the newly formed wadi).

The changing city

The relatively formal, classical layout of a street flanked by colonnades forming porticoes did not last long, though, as the early Islamic culture soon stamped its own mark on the town layout it had largely inherited from the Greco-Roman-Byzantine world. The spaces between the portico columns on both sides of the street were filled in with walls that formed rooms of irregular shapes and sizes. This happened during at least four phases of construction during the first century after 650; this change reflected the urban experiences and notions of the earliest town dwellers there, probably muwalyiyeen (clients) of Uthman Ibn Affan from Madina or Egyptian converts, according to Dr Whitcomb. One of the values of this site for scholars is the rare ability to track the evolution of early Islamic urbanism as it took shape and matured in the several centuries after Ayla's founding.

The synthesis of Islamic cultural identity with earlier traditions from the greater Mediterranean region is also evidenced in some of the material finds from the excavations, such as coins, medallions and glass or bronze weights. These often reflect Roman, Byzantine or Sasanian (Persian) influences in the early Islamic years, but later are modified to reflect a more distinct Islamic culture. One of the important aspects of the Ayla excavation is its revelation of more clear Sasanian influences in the art and architecture of the land of Jordan in the mid-7th Century, following the brief Sasanian occupation of Egypt, Jordan and Palestine in the years 618-629 AD.

Immediately south of the

mihrab, the excavations uncovered a courtyard from the Fatimid period, beneath which were Abbasid materials going down to a series of thick plaster floors. These floors were damaged by Abbasid or Fatimid pits and extensive robbing of the earlier walls (probably to use the stones to build the Abbasid mosque). Beneath these plaster floors were at least two metres of Umayyad fill, wall foundations and indications of even earlier structures from the beginning of the Umayyad period.

The architecture towards the centre of the city is markedly different from that towards the external town walls. The city-centre tends to have massive architecture that is very well finished, including 80-centimetre-thick walls, nice limestone floors, and very smoothly plastered and painted walls. One such well built wall was excavated at a right angle to the south side of the mosque, and it seems to have enclosed one or even two large buildings. These substantial structures immediately south of the Abbasid mosque may have been associated with the earlier Umayyad mosque, and perhaps may have been part of the dar el imara (the administrative centre of the town, usually located adjacent to the congregational mosque). This will need further excavations to be clarified.

"The complexities of urban architecture revealed in our excavations at Ayla reflect the general lack of archaeological evidence for the process of urbanisation in early Islamic cities," Dr Whitcomb said, adding that "the data being recovered at Ayla is an important step towards clarifying and delineating this history."

The last two seasons of excavations at Ayla have been sponsored by the University of Chicago, in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities, and have been funded by the University of Chicago, the Department of Antiquities, and the Aqaba Region Authority. The department's representative was Sawwan Fakhr, and staff for the project came from Jordan, the USA, Lebanon, France and Palestine.

Results confirm Arafat's grip

(Continued from page 1)

These included the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Despite the boycotts, though, the new council's 12 opposition figures included five considered close to Hamas and two from the PFLP.

Five women gained seats, notably Hanan Ashrawi, the former spokeswoman for the Palestinian peace negotiators, and Mr. Arafat's outgoing social affairs minister, Nasser al Wazir.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) headquarters were said Tuesday's "final results" remained provisional pending complaints filed by some losing candidates. Already early Tuesday one seat changed hands when election officials in Gaza City announced that Rawya Al Shawa had won, contrary to her announced defeat by the CEC Ramallah office.

Other candidates reported such irregularities as unattended ballot boxes, missing ballots and pressure on voters by officials and policemen in polling stations to choose Fatah candidates.

But Ian Blackley, spokesman for the European Union elections unit which is coordinating monitoring of the polls by some 650 foreign observers, playing down the seriousness of the problems. "I don't think we're that concerned," he said Tuesday. "What we're talking about is a very tiny proportion of the whole election and this must be kept in proportion," he told AFP.

Mr. Blackley said clear procedures had been set out for candidates to file protests with the Central Election Commission and the delay in issuing official final results appeared due to commission efforts to investigate complaints.

"They want to do a proper counting job and they want to convince the world that they are doing a serious job," he said.

The international observers issued a joint statement Sunday declaring that the election had been "an accurate expression of the will of the voters."

Meanwhile, the independent Centre for Palestine Research and Studies issued the results of an exit poll conducted on election day which showed that voters pinned high hopes on the new council to play a leading role in shaping future negotiations with Israel.

Some 31 per cent of voters said completing peace talks with Israel was the council's most important priority, 28 per cent put solving economic problems first, 22 per cent believed maintaining order and security was the top task while 18 per cent thought achieving democracy was the main priority.

Forty per cent of those asked said they wanted the council to be more powerful than Mr. Arafat, with 39 per cent saying they wanted the legislature to share equal power with him.

"Those Palestinians who voted expect the council to be an effective council and they expect checks and balances," said Khalil Shakaki, director of CPRS.

"They expect the major

issues will be discussed and voted in this council."

But the overwhelming victory for Fatah implies that the expectations will remain unfulfilled, he added.

"I expect the council will be weak and Arafat will continue to be as authoritarian as ever," he said.

"This won't be a rubber stamp but it will be something very close to it."

Fifty per cent of the voters said they supported the Oslo interim autonomy agreement with Israel, while only 16 per cent opposed it outright.

Another 33 per cent said they had mixed feelings about the limited self-rule pact.

Seven per cent of the voters identified themselves as

Hamas supporters, while five per cent said they were PFLP backers. CPRS estimated that Hamas supporters comprise 15 per cent of the population and the PFLP about six per cent.

The high opposition turnout was a protest against the leadership policy and also showed that many voters cast their ballots for "non-political" reasons such as trying to help elect a friend or relative or simply be a part of the excitement surrounding the polling, said Nader Said, who worked on the poll.

The survey was conducted together with the Washington-based International Republican Institute.

Peres insists PLO amend charter

(Continued from page 1)

Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, has already rejected Israel's invitation.

But another PNC member, Bassam Abu Sharif, on Tuesday ended more than 28 years in exile when he crossed into the West Bank town of Jericho from Jordan.

He told journalists he was in favour of scrapping the controversial clauses from

the charter.

"My first plan is to go to Gaza to congratulate Yasser Arafat on his election by the people as president of the Palestinian executive," said Mr. Abu Sharif.

"One way or another I will continue my political work to help my people with building an independent state and its institutions," he told journalists.

Iraq seen close to deal

(Continued from page 1)

cision to reconsider its attitude on oil sales and analysts in Baghdad said Iraqi leaders were determined to succeed with talks.

News of the offer of talks was greeted by residents of Baghdad firing shots in the air as a sign of jubilation. Food prices have fallen, and the value of the dinar has risen against the U.S. dollar

in anticipation of a deal (see page 8).

Iraq's most influential newspaper Babel, owned by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, said on Tuesday that an end to the suffering of Iraqis was near. "Let's close ranks for our final victory which is so close," the paper said in an editorial.

Bahrain to try 8 activists

(Continued from page 1)

Arabic newspaper, predicted calm would return following the arrests of the eight people.

Iran's press on Tuesday denied accusations that the Islamic republic is behind the unrest in Bahrain.

Bahrain publicly blamed Iran for the first time at the weekend of stirring up the protests.

But the official Iranian news agency IRNA said: "Instability, wherever it is in the region, does not benefit Iran."

It recalled that Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati denied last week Iran's involvement in Bahrain's troubles, although the government is yet to react to the latest accusations.

The Tehran Times wrote: "Externalising domestic problems is not a solution to the crisis in Bahrain."

The Iran News said: "Accusing Iran of masterminding the disturbances in Manama or any other Persian Gulf Arab sheikhdom is an old ploy of U.S. foreign policy to justify the illegal presence of American forces in the region."

All the press said the only solution for the Bahraini government was to respond to the protesters' demands for democracy.

Bahrain's state-run televi-

sion on Monday showed hundreds of well-wishers congratulating Sheikh Isa on the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Ben Mubarak Al Khalifa on Monday met separately ambassadors of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and told them that Bahrain would not go easy with groups attempting to disturb security and stability in the country.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid condemned on Tuesday "acts of rioting and terrorism" in Bahrain.

Dr. Abdul Meguid, in a league statement received by AFP, denounced the "acts of rioting, sabotage and terrorism committed against the sister nation Bahrain."

The violence "aims at spreading fear and panic among the secure citizens" of the Gulf island emirate, he said.

The league "stands by Bahrain in all actions and precautions it takes against these interventionist acts against Arab society which violate all Arab and Islamic values," he added.

The head of the pan-Arab body took an implicit swipe at Iran, condemning "the external interventions aiming to raise civil strife and shake security and stability."

Bosnia to release Serb prisoners

(Continued from page 12)

promising to place guards on specific sites.

The NATO mission is broadly on course after persuading the rival armies to withdraw from front lines and create a separation zone be-

tween the Bosnian Serb and Muslim-Croat halves.

NATO spokesman Mark Rayner said peacekeepers had found a dozen illegal heavy weapons, belonging to all three sides, still inside the separation zone.

Kuwait says it is close to Saudi sea border pact

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait said it would soon agree sea borders with Saudi Arabia in an offshore area of the Gulf that experts say contains large oil reserves.

Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah said talks were making smooth progress and the two countries would soon conduct formal procedures to conclude an agreement.

"Understanding and solid relations between the two countries is a foregone fact and there is no place for misunderstanding between us. The agreement will soon be concluded," he was quoted as adding by the Kuwait News Agency late on Monday.

Sheikh Sabah visited Riyadh on Saturday for talks on the issue following months of discussions by technical teams.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia agreed their land borders in 1965 but have no accord finalising sovereignty in offshore areas.

Oil industry officials estimate that at least six billion barrels of oil are contained in the offshore section of the so-called Neutral Zone shared by the two countries.

Kuwait officials have said a "border agreement with

Saudi Arabia could pave the way for talks on a similar agreement on territorial waters between Kuwait and Iran.

That in turn would lay the territorial and legal framework for oil exploration outside the zone's offshore section.

The zone was established in 1922 after negotiations between the sultanate of Nejd, now part of Saudi Arabia, and a British official representing Kuwait, then a British protectorate.

Under that agreement the two territories agreed to equally share mineral rights to the zone.

The two countries shared the administrative responsibilities for the zone until 1965, when they agreed to divide the land area of the zone into two sections and annex the sections to the respective countries. That agreement took effect in 1970.

The offshore sector of the zone is operated by the Arabian Oil Company and production runs at between 250,000 to 300,000 barrels per day, company officials say. A majority of company stock is held by Japanese interests but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia each hold a 10 per cent interest in the firm.

Lebanon wants death for Lahd

(Continued from page 12)

The villagers were taken to the zone village of Debel. No further details were immediately available.

Some 200 Lebanese are held without trial, some for as long as 10 years, by the SLA at Khiam jail

Arabs urged to cut defence spending to revive economy

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states have been urged to cut defence expenditure to support domestic development and ensure funds for financing reforms aimed at tackling long-standing economic problems, the UAE press reported Tuesday.

Delegates from the chambers of commerce and industry in the 22-member Arab League made the call at a conference held in Bahrain last week and attended by representatives from Iran and Turkey as well as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA).

The conference covered the effects of the new world order, the GATT accord and peace in the Middle East on the Arab economies and the

need for member states to drop their political rifts and start economic integration.

"Arab states should transfer part of the defence expenditure to economic and industrial development and increase spending on important sectors, such as health and education," they said in their recommendations, published in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) press Tuesday.

The participants also urged their governments to chalk out long-term strategies, encouraging the private sector and creating better investment climates.

The report gave no figures on Arab defence spending but according to independent estimates, the league's member states have spent more than \$100 billion over the

past two decades on arms purchases.

Arab countries are also classified as among the biggest defence spenders in the world relative to their budgets, with such a level accounting for nearly a quarter of their total expenditure. In such countries as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Sudan and Bahrain, it exceeds 30 per cent.

Several Arab countries have launched reforms to heal their economic woes that have been caused by inadequate policies, misuse of funds and decades of state domination of their economy. Economic problems involve accumulating debts, deficits in the budget and balance of payments, slow growth, and inflation.

Iraqi dinar strengthens as oil talks draw near

BAGHDAD (R) — The Iraqi dinar rose strongly against the U.S. dollar Tuesday on news of imminent talks with the United Nations on a plan to allow Iraq to sell oil for food.

"It (dinar) is up to 1,500 to the dollar. It was 2,200 yesterday and 3,000 early this month," a money changer in Baghdad said.

The surge in the dinar's value led to a decline in prices of essential commodities in Baghdad, residents said.

U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali said Monday he hoped that talks with Iraq on the oil-for-food plan will begin soon and expressed cautious optimism that they would succeed.

Iraq agreed Friday to talk

to the United Nations on implementing the Security Council's offer to sell \$2 billion worth of oil in order to buy badly needed food and medicine and other goods for its people, who have been under crippling sanctions for more than five years.

The dinar began its surge last week when news of the possibility of talks emerged from New York.

It was the first time the dinar gained so much value in a week since the U.N. imposed its sanctions on Iraq for invading Kuwait in 1990.

Traders said they expected the dinar to strengthen more in the coming days.

"We have to sell as we do not know when the market will stabilise," one trader said.

"There is a lot of news on Iraq nowadays and different people have different interpretations," said another.

Iraqis are for the first time clinging to their dinars and preferring them to dollars and gold. Money changers said even big traders who flocked to their shops for dollars in the past were no longer interested in buying.

Traders also expected prices to continue falling. A kilogramme of sugar was down to 1,000 dinars from 1,700 a week ago. First grade flour slid to 740 from 1,140.

Prices of property, cars, refrigerators, air-coolers, washing machines and spare parts were also falling in Baghdad, they said.

Traders said news from Jordan was not encouraging

for trade thereby lowering demand for the dollar. Amman decided to cut back its credited exports to Iraq, reported around \$400 million in 1995, by about 50 per cent in 1996.

As prices of goods plunged in reaction to the dinar surge, the government, applying austerity measures to withdraw excess money in circulation, is raising rates of its utilities and imposing unprecedented taxes.

Prices of petrol and other oil products were increased by approximately eight-fold. Travel and building permit fees went up by two-fold.

Finance Minister Hikmat Al Azzawi said Tuesday tax on "big incomes" was raised to 50 per cent from 30 per cent.

Bank of Japan seen keeping record low interest rate

TOKYO (R) — Japan's central bank is likely to maintain its easy credit stance in the first half of the fiscal year starting on April one to stimulate capital spending and employment, according to a Reuters poll of leading economists.

The poll of 23 economists at research institutes, banks and brokerage houses found that all but one expected the Bank of Japan (BOJ) to leave its official lending rate unchanged from the current record low of 0.5 per cent at least until the end of September.

"A rise in the discount rate seems unlikely in the near future because smaller business may remain weak and due to sluggishness in the labour market," said Toshiki Kaneki, an economist at Sumitomo Trust and Banking Co.

Mr. Kaneki said he expected the discount rate to stay at 0.5 per cent until the end of the 1996/97 business year.

Japan's discount rate, at which the BOJ lends money to a commercial banks, was cut to a record low 0.5 per cent from 1.0 per cent last Sept. 8.

But many economists said it was possible that the BOJ might end its current credit policy of guiding short-term money market rates lower than the discount rate in the next fiscal year, depending on the health of the economy.

"It will depend on the speed of economic recovery. But the BOJ may allow the

key overnight rate to rise gradually in the second quarter of the next business year," said Ryo Sawai, an economist at Yamaichi Securities.

Mr. Sawai said he expected the key overnight call rate to rise to around 0.6 per cent in the fourth quarter of fiscal 1996/97.

The central bank can affect money market rates through its daily money market operations, altering the pool of funds in the market by buying or selling bills or other instruments.

Given the BOJ's accommodative operations, the key overnight call rate has been mostly within a range of 0.45 to 0.50 per cent since Sept. 8, when the discount rate was last cut.

The BOJ started to guide the key short-term money market rate lower than its discount rate on March 31 last year to help support the ailing economy.

The low cost of raising funds from the market has helped financial institutions solve their bad loan problems. But they are expected to suffer from having to bear a share of the burden of winding up Japan's troubled mortgage firms, which have problem loans estimated at 8.13 trillion yen (\$77.4 billion), including unrecoverable loans totalling 6.27 trillion yen (\$59.7 billion).

A controversial government plan to use 685 billion yen (\$6.52 billion) of taxpayers' money in the wind-up is to be discussed in parliament from Monday.

Some economists said Japanese money market rates may rise in line with an increase in import prices as the yen is likely to continue falling against the dollar. The dollar hit a record low of 79.75 yen last April.

"An expected rise in import prices may result in a 20 to 30 basis point rise in interest rates, so the key overnight rate is likely to rise to around 0.70 per cent at the beginning of this summer," Sumitomo Trust's Kaneki said.

The poll showed economists differed in their estimates for longer-term bond yields, depending on how strong the recovery would be together with the course of inflation, and on how overseas interest rates would affect domestic rates.

They forecast the yield of the benchmark 10-year Japanese government bond (JGB) would rise to 3.30 per cent on average by the end of September. Their forecasts varied from 2.80 per cent to 3.8 per cent.

The poll, carried out between Jan. 9 on a broad range of indicators, covered a total of 29 economists, but they did not all give a full set of forecasts for each indicator.

Japan's central bank governor pledged Tuesday to give powerful support for a long-awaited recovery by maintaining the current easy monetary stance.

"In managing monetary policy for now we would like to strongly support economic recovery by maintaining our

current accommodative credit stance," Bank of Japan Governor Yasuo Mutsuhashi told a meeting of the bank's branch managers.

The remarks were taken by market participants as indicating that the central bank would keep the discount rate at the current record low of 0.5 per cent, and the more-sensitive overnight money rate below the level of the discount rate for the time being.

This market belief was reinforced when Mr. Mutsuhashi said the central bank was ready to provide all the support it could if domestic banks faced any liquidity problem as a result of their restructuring efforts.

"The market is not expecting the BOJ to tighten its grip in the medium term because of lingering worries over troubled Japanese housing loan companies," a trust bank trader here said. "The

overnight rate will be maintained at below 0.50 per cent."

Turning to the broader economic picture, Mr. Mutsuhashi said the economy was now setting a basis for recovery after four years of negligible growth, with signs emerging of a recovery in the areas of demand and production.

The dollar's sharp rebound to above 105 yen — a 30 per cent jump from its record low last April — is taking pressure off manufacturers here by making their products competitive abroad.

The economy has also been drawing strength from a package of stimulus steps announced in September and worth 14 trillion yen (\$133 billion) that features massive public works spending, analysts said.

In the speech, Mutsuhashi welcomed the recent rally in Tokyo stocks, saying it was a result of improved

business confidence at home.

But the governor stopped well short of declaring that a full-fledged recovery was likely to start this year, saying that uncertainty remained as to whether the economy would move onto a sustainable recovery track.

The BOJ governor appeared to take a slightly more cautious line than Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, who pledged a day earlier to realise full economic recovery by the end of 1996.

In his first policy speech to parliament, Mr. Hashimoto said the most urgent task for his cabinet was to rebuild a strong economy. "We must turn this year into the year of economic recovery which will lead to sustainable growth in

the medium to longer term," Mr. Hashimoto said.

But Mr. Mutsuhashi formed a united front with the coalition government in calling for swift implementation of a government scheme announced in December of wind up mortgage firms burdened by bad debts.

"Our urgent task at the moment is to implement the (bad loan) measures as quickly and smoothly as possible after winning public support for the scheme," Mr. Mutsuhashi said.

The government is now trying hard to win public support for the scheme, which would use 685 billion yen of taxpayers' money to liquidate the firms, by ensuring transparency and clarifying who was to blame for the mess.

EU economy threatened with rough ride to 1999

BRUSSELS (R) — Europe's economic health has taken centre stage in an intensifying debate over the future of monetary union, with top officials offering conflicting views on how a downturn might affect the single currency timetable.

Signs of economic slowdown and warnings on company profits have taken the gloss off the European Union's (EU's) hopes of a smooth ride to the launch of a single currency in 1999.

Germany is the key, due to its overall economic importance and a more uncertain domestic situation which threatens to weaken its leading role in constructing a single currency.

Rising unemployment, sluggish orders and a strong mark have left the country struggling to keep its finances in order.

EU diplomats say Germany is entering a critical stage, one which will either make or break its ability to meet the Maastricht treaty's criteria on public deficits for countries which seek to qualify for the single currency.

"I think there will be a major debate in Germany over the next few weeks on how they get out of the fiscal mess," said one senior diplomat in Brussels.

At 3.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), Germany's 1995 budget deficit was well above the three per cent target specified by the key EU treaty.

But economists warn that a strategy of further spending cuts or higher taxes would harm the economy's already meagre growth performance, and make the three per cent target even more elusive.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) State your aims to close ties or others who can help you to attain them. Be more willing to accept changes which can lead to benefits.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Sit down with associates today and show that you will cooperate more with them. Impress others favourably.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You want to have a good time today so go along with the ideas of buddies you like and be happy.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make plans for handling important matters at your abode. You may want to redecorate or rearrange the articles within your home.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Your partners will listen to your ideas for making changes here and there which can bring about greater efficiency.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Adding new touches to your environment can give you pride and praise. Stop dreaming and start doing.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get in touch with the bigwigs you know this morning and gain support for your ventures towards your ultimate success.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a good day to study into whatever is puzzling to you and come up with the right answer. Evening at home can be charming.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Try not to have an independent air and show those you like which you will cooperate more with them.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Make sure you handle civic and community affairs well to day and gain the right benefits from them. Show more devotion.

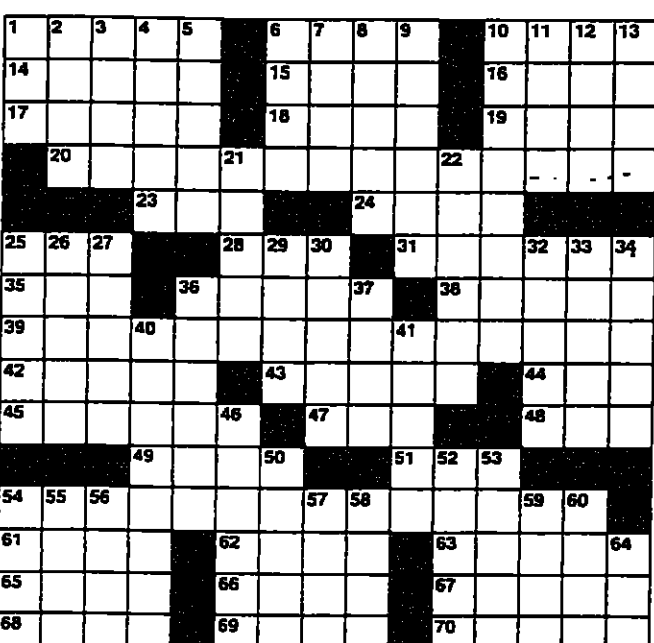
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have many new interests in mind today so discuss them with the right people and come to a fine understanding with them.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Study your surroundings well and see what can be completed to make them more charming. Add an artistic flair.

Birthstone of January: Garnet
Rose Quartz

THE Daily Crossword by Alvin L. Becker

- ACROSS**
- Director Frank
 - "The Cowardly Lion"
 - Snore letters
 - Viva voce
 - Healing lily plant
 - Raison d'
 - Opera voices
 - Boost
 - Mix
 - TV game show
 - "A Boy Named"
 - (Cash)
 - Jai
 - Psychic letters
 - Owned
 - Wild fancies
 - Slate: abbr.
 - Bond
 - Key
 - Game of chance
 - Trencherman
 - On the alert
 - Vase
 - Exert pressure
 - Secondary matter
 - Nautical chain
 - Govt. agts.
 - Alien craft?
 - Gambling game
 - Learn
 - Lazy Susan
 - Arm span
 - Assuage
 - Beam
 - Store of hidden goods
 - "When I was —"
 - Flagmaker
 - Betsy
 - A John



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Yesterday's puzzle solved:

CHAP CEDAR SAMS
LOCI ATONE PLEA
OPEN LORIS EARL
DISMAL IST ERGO
OFMICEANDWEN
CHARTER TOY
AIDE ANSER SUN
PLAYCATANDMOUSE
TOM ANETO DREW
BLT OBEYERS
MANOFLETTERS
AGES ELI FASTED
CARS RINGO ERLE
HIVE EDGAR YALLE
ONES DEERE SPARI

- DOWN**
- Public vehicle
 - "L —" (TV show)
 - Fashionable
 - Scams
 - So long
 - Fr. composer
 - First Arabic letter

- Noted labor boss
- Narrated again
- Most piquant
- Caesar
- "go brag"
- Saharan
- Composer
- Franz
- Unusual thing
- A Ford
- Bnstles
- Rio de la
- Asian border river
- Bright star
- Northern native
- Festive
- Composer Jule
- Composer
- Overwhelm with laughter
- Stretched across a frame
- Concert hall

- Drink of the gods
- Lethargy: pref.
- Energy
- Tatum
- Tea plant
- Cure
- Tabula

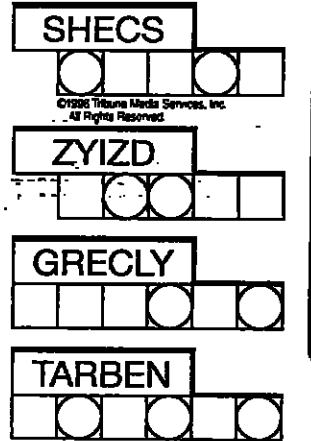
- Cheers
- Coloring agents
- Sensitivity to what is proper
- Sympathetic response
- Layer



"My doctor says walking can reduce stress—but he's never walked with you!"

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here:
Yesterday's Jumbles: BORAX QUEST BUCKLE POTTER
Answer: The detectives considered the school vandalism a—TEXTBOOK CASE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argleton

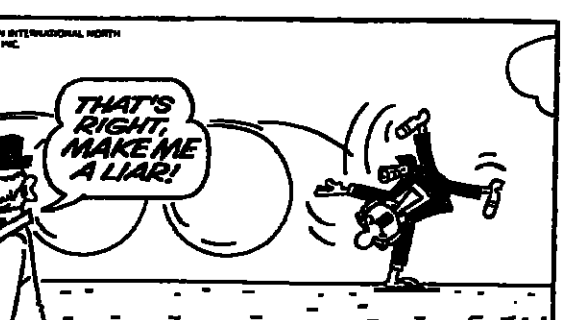


Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

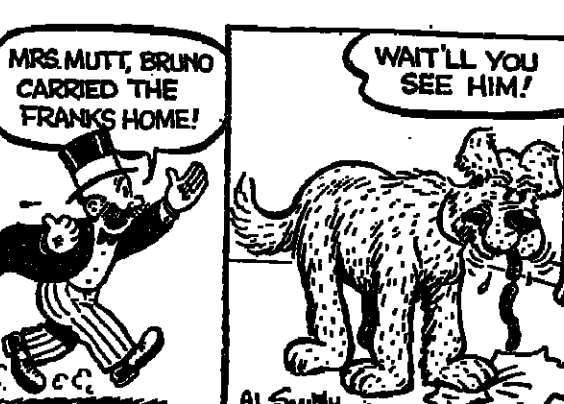
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



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Discussions underway on restructuring reduced Jordanian exports to Iraq

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian and Iraqi businessmen and officials are negotiating a sectoral restructuring of the Kingdom's exports to Iraq in view of Amman's decision to halve Jordanian exports to its eastern neighbour in 1996, market sources said Tuesday.

"The discussions began several days ago after it be-

came clear that Jordan and Iraq had reached agreement that total Jordanian exports to Iraq covered under the official 1996 protocol would not exceed \$220 million," said a businessman involved in the negotiations.

The negotiations focus on "what kind of products could be included in the Jordanian-Iraqi trade protocol for 1996 and the sectoral distribution of the products," said the

businessman, who did not want to be identified.

Official sources confirmed that the discussions were underway but declined to be specific.

According to the sources, the decision to nearly halve exports to Iraq in return for Iraqi oil was taken and agreed with Baghdad in view of Jordan's need to build foreign exchange reserves

against the mounting Iraqi debts to the Kingdom.

Under the new arrangement, Jordan, through the Central Bank, would offer Iraq export credit guarantees for only \$220 million in 1996 as opposed to \$400 million in 1995.

Baghdad, which has not paid cash for any imports from Jordan since 1990 under the annual protocols, now owes Amman about \$1.2 billion even after reducing the cost of Iraqi oil supplies, officials say.

Iraq is under a sweeping trade embargo imposed by the United Nations following the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions prevent Iraq from all exports, including oil, which used to account for 90 per cent of the country's foreign revenues before 1990.

The Iraqi oil supply to Jordan — about 70,000 to 75,000 barrels per day — is exempt from the sanctions since it comes in part settlement of Iraqi debts to Jordan incurred during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war and thereafter. Jordan settled another part of the cost of the oil in food and medicine exports to Iraq.

In December 1995, Jordan and Iraq renewed their annual oil supply agreement under which Iraq will supply Jordan with 3.2 million tonnes of crude oil and 1.2 million tonnes of fuel oil in 1996. In addition, Jordan also sought 100,000 tonnes of crude oil and 1.2 million tonnes of fuel oil in 1996. In addition, Jordan also sought

100,000 tonnes of gas from Iraq during 1996.

The oil and gas supply accord is not expected to be affected by the reduction in Jordanian exports to Iraq.

Disclosing the decision to reduce exports under the arrangement, official sources stressed Friday that the move had no political bearings and was not a byproduct of the coolness in Jordanian-Iraqi political relations since the defection to Jordan in August of two senior Iraqi officials.

Local businessmen said the halving of exports did not necessarily mean an across-the-board halving of products included in the 1996 protocol. "This has to be worked out in detailed discussions with the Iraqi side and the Jordanian government," said the businessman. "The Iraqi demand for some products is relatively higher than others and this has to be taken into account."

In any event, whatever formula is worked out, it is unlikely to satisfy Jordanian exporters, many of whom argue that their entire production is geared for the Iraqi market.

According to another businessman, Jordan exported about 75,000 tonnes of vegetable ghee to Iraq in 1995 and Iraq would like to have the same quantity in 1996. This would mean a dramatic cut in other products and draw protest from their manufacturers and exporters, the businessman pointed out.

At the same time, some of

the vegetable ghee manufacturers export their entire output to Iraq and if there was to be a cut in the volume allowed to be sent to Iraq then they would also suffer badly.

"It is catch-22," said the businessman. "There is no way everybody could be made happy because somebody has to suffer the loss in exports."

Several other businessmen meanwhile described the cut in exports as having come at the "worst" time, given that Iraq is seen moving towards accepting a United Nations offer of a limited oil sale to raise cash to pay for its food and medicine imports.

"We have been patient and waited for so long before signs have emerged that Iraq would soon have cash to pay for its imports," said a leading trader. "The Jordanian decision to have the volume of exports in the protocol could easily lead to Iraq deliberating seeking non-Jordanian sources for its imports for cash."

According to the trader, Iraq used to pay cash for imports from Jordan outside its protocol with the Kingdom in the first two years after the imposition of trade sanctions against Baghdad in August 1990. For more than one year thereafter it offered deferred payment guaranteed by foreign banks holding frozen Iraqi assets.

"In the last two years, there has been relatively very little Iraqi purchases for cash from Jordan," said the trader, who also did not want to be identified. Imports by the Iraqi private sector also came to almost standstill after the execution of more than 40 Iraqi merchants accused of profiteering, added the trader.

"Right now, our free zones are full of sugar and rice imported by local traders hoping to export them to Iraq," said another source. "At least four other ships with similar items are expected to dock at Aqaba in the next few days."

"What are they going to do if they are unable to ship the products to Iraq?"

One way out is for the Jordanian Ministry of Supply to buy the goods, but, in most cases, the products destined for Iraq fall below the strict standards of quality and specifications set by the Jordanian government and are not acceptable to the local market, noted the sources.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Land prices, rent highest on Wasfi Al Tal Street

★ THE COST of a 1,000 square-metre (dunum) of commercial land on Wasfi Al Tal (Gardens) Street and Al Madineh Al Munawwarah Street has reached JD 500,000 while the rent of a square metre of space in commercial buildings in those areas and in Shmeisani ranges between JD 40 and JD 50 per year, the owner of Shmeisani Real Estate Commercial Office has said. Fathi Mheisen also indicated that key money ranging between JD 15,000 and JD 20,000 was requested by showrooms and stores but not by commercial offices due to ample supply of empty office buildings. Mr. Mheisen said the real estate market was "suffering from an unprecedented recession due to the wait-and-see attitude in the aftermath of the peace process and to the lack of enough encouragement to Arab and foreign investors."

Ziyad Al Ghoul, owner of an establishment in Shmeisani, said office rent in the Shmeisani area was very high if measured against the level of income and standard of living and even against the commercial activity. He pointed out that rent was between JD 2,500 and JD 5,000 per year for offices with an area ranging between 50 to 100 square metres.

Sayel Irbeihat, owner of an office for commercial services in the Sports City area, said the rent for a 50-square metre office with services, except electricity, was JD 2,000 per year or JD 40 per square metre. He added that due to the slack economic activity, key money for a commercial office in the Sports City area was JD 2,000. Mr. Irbeihat said that three years ago he rented an office near Al Bourj Tower in Jabal Amman for JD 650 and the landlord is now demanding JD 850 per year for the same office. Asked where office rent was highest, Mr. Irbeihat replied that was to be found in Wasfi Al Tal Street where an economic revival is expected.

Munir Rahahieh, owner of another office for trading and general services in the Sports City area, said rent in his vicinity was high compared to other areas such as Jabal Amman. Noting that he pays JD 1,900 per annum for his 42-square metre office, he said that key money for a 35-square metre office in the same building was about JD 2,000 with higher amount requested for larger spaces.

Sami Amro, who owns Jawharat Al Quds building with other partners in Abdali, said the annual rent of commercial offices amounts to JD 25 per square metre including central heating, elevator maintenance, corridor lighting and security services. He explained that landlords do not benefit from key money which goes to the tenants who demand between JD 2,000 and JD 5,000 for their commercial offices. Mr. Amro saw there had not been much changes in the rent or in the general commercial activity in the Kingdom after the peace process and he pointed out that it was with great difficulty that rents were collected. He said that many buildings and apartments are still vacant due to high cost of rent or sale.

Kamal Khoury, partner in the Khalil Khoury and Sons Company, said the rent of the company's three stores, opposite the Palace of Justice in downtown Amman, was JD 600 since 1963, but the amount was increased to JD 1,245 after the amendments were made to the tenant's law. Now, key money for each store is around JD 100,000, Mr. Khoury said.

Tenants, such as Wasef Qaryuti and Nael Salaitah who rent offices on Saqf Al Sail in the centre of the city, pay far less in rent. Mr. Qaryuti who pays JD 200 for the office he rented in 1973 saw the location unsuitable for commercial offices for lack of parking space. He said that businessmen preferred offices in buildings on Wasfi Al Tal, Mecca and Al Madineh Al Munawwarah streets despite higher rent. Mr. Qaryuti noted that there was no requirement for key money at his area on Saqf Al Sail where landlords demand JD 15 per square metre for office space.

Mr. Salaitah, whose office is in the same city centre area, said rent was JD 1,000 for a 60-square metre office and noted that new rents there were signed for JD 600 or JD 500. He mentioned that the area is supposed to be very active commercially but due to slack business over the past years, many businessmen were moving their offices to other areas (Al Aswaq).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTRAL BANK - SEMEISANI				
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICES LIST FOR TUESDAY 23/01/1996				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE
ARAB BANK	560	131040	237.000	234.000
CITIBANK	10050	45225	4.500	4.500
BANK OF JORDAN	800	2480	3.100	3.100
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	4980	13045	2.650	2.640
THE HOUSING BANK	1350	6413	4.800	4.750
JORDAN GULF BANK	15500	16380	1.060	1.050
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	1510	8583	2.310	3.700
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1000	3530	3.530	3.530
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	10935	9294	0.860	0.850
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	3800	5249	1.420	1.380
BANKS SECTOR	50485	238639	INDEX NUMBER: 185.84	CHANGE: -1.072
JORDAN GULF INSURANCE	750	1988	2.650	2.650
INSURANCE SECTOR	750	1988	INDEX NUMBER: 129.20	CHANGE: 0.007
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	6300	10773	1.720	1.710
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	500	4400	8.800	8.800
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	100	158	1.580	1.580
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	1500	1590	1.060	1.060
ARAB ENTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	1447	6663	3.420	3.420
SARAA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	2000	2400	1.210	1.200
UNIFIED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	12500	28050	2.220	2.220
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	550	528	0.970	0.960
SERVICES SECTOR	25397	54572	INDEX NUMBER: 176.68	CHANGE: -0.137
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	20	430	21.000	21.000
JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	2647	9589	3.630	3.610
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	850	8428	9.950	9.880
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1600	5800	3.650	3.630
JORDAN DAIRY	1000	2550	2.550	2.550
THE PUBLIC MINING	100	280	2.810	2.800
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1100	7840	7.150	7.100
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRY	150	018	5.450	5.450
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	7750	4768	0.610	0.600
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1100	1540	1.410	1.400
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	6511	6379	0.990	0.980
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	100	148	1.520	1.480
JORDAN PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	2400	3480	1.010	1.000
ARAB CENTER FOR FIBRE & CHEMICALS	1350	2282	1.700	1.690
UNIVERSAL MOHRE INDUSTRIES	1100	2473	3.170	3.150
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	9350	17694	1.900	1.880
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	2480	3371	1.390	1.370
24-HOUR READY WARE MANUFACTURING CO.	5340	13039	2.460	2.450
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	15150	20664	1.370	1.360
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY	400	624	1.580	1.560
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	61546	111944	INDEX NUMBER: 122.18	CHANGE: -0.267
GRAND TOTAL	138148	407142	INDEX NUMBER: 154.10	CHANGE: -0.657
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET	70476			
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET	57267			

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Tuesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3710/20	Canadian dollar	1.4764/74
	1.4764/74	Deutsche marks	1.6530/40
	1.6530/40	Dutch guilders	1.1878/88
	1.1878/88	Swiss francs	30.33/37
	30.33/37	Belgian francs	5.0563/13
	5.0563/13	French francs	1595.4/6.9
	1595.4/6.9	Italian lire	105.73/83
	105.73/83	Japanese yen	6.8540/40
	6.8540/40	Swedish crowns	6.4730/80
	6.4730/80	Norwegian crowns	5.7087/87
	5.7087/87	Danish crowns	1.4182/92
	1.4182/92	Singapore dollars	0.7341/46
	0.7341/46	Australian dollars	7.7305/15
	7.7305/15	Hong Kong dollars	

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Financial Markets
in co-operation with
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Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close
Sterling Pound*	1.5123	1.5138**
Deutsche Mark	1.4750	1.4733
Swiss Franc	1.1855	1.1848**
French Franc	5.0474	5.0478**
Japanese Yen	105.75	105.58
European Currency Unit	1.2480	1.2506**

* USD Per STD
** European Opening @ 8:00 a.m. GMT
Eurocurrency Interest Rates

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.30	5.18	5.12	4.95
Sterling Pound	6.06	6.00	5.93	5.87
Deutsche Mark	3.38	3.25	3.12	3.12
Swiss Franc	1.50	1.50	1.44	1.44
French Franc	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.43	0.35	0.43
European Currency Unit	4.75	4.63	4.56	4.50

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	403.59	7.90	Silver	5.59	0.100

* 21 Karat
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin
Date: 23/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7050	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0704	1.0758
Deutsche Mark	0.4799	0.4823
Swiss Franc	0.5971	0.6001
French Franc	0.1403	0.1410
Japanese Yen*	0.6698	0.6731
Dutch Guilder	0.4287	0.4308
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira*	0.0445	0.0447
Belgian Franc	*****	*****

* Per 100

Super Bowl 30 — a championship reunion for Dallas and Pittsburgh

PHOENIX (AFP) — The Super Bowl turns 30 on Sunday with a revival of the championship rivalry between Dallas and Pittsburgh that stretches back through two decades and two previous Super Bowl clashes.

Both the Cowboys and the Steelers will be vying to join San Francisco as the only teams to win the National Football League (NFL) championship game five times.

The Steelers, who beat the Cowboys in Super Bowls 10 and 13, after the 1975 and 1978 seasons, are also trying to end the American Conference's run of 11 Super Bowl losses.

The Cowboys, who will be playing in a record eighth Super Bowl, are heavy favourites to continue the National Conference's string of successes by winning the title for the third time in four years.

Dallas quarterback Troy Aikman said the Cowboys were delighted, though not necessarily surprised, to be back in the Super Bowl after falling at the penultimate hurdle to San Francisco last year.

"Since we won the Super Bowl in '92 (after the 1992 season), it became the goal every year," Aikman says. "When you come up short of that, it's extremely frustrating. You spend the season trying to put yourself in a position to accomplish that."

The Cowboys reached the Super Bowl with playoff victories over Philadelphia and Green Bay. They didn't have to worry about San Francisco, who were upset by the Packers in the second round.

"It's not less exciting," Aikman said of the repeat appearance. "The first season we went was great for us because nobody realised how talented we were. It shocked a lot of people, including ourselves. I guess the innocence of it has been lost."

Dallas still have the Most Valuable Players of the 1992 and

1993 Super Bowls in Aikman himself and running back Emmitt Smith.

The Steelers beat Buffalo and Indianapolis to reach the Super Bowl, claiming a 20-16 victory over the Colts in the AFC championship game only after Jim Harbaugh's last gasp pass to the end zone bounced off receiver Aaron Bailey in the final seconds.

While the current crop of Cowboys have staked a claim to being the NFL's team of the 90s, the current Steelers have been overshadowed by their predecessors, who made Pittsburgh the team of the 70s with four Super Bowl victories in that decade.

In 1976, Glen Edwards' interception in the final seconds capped a superb defensive effort and gave Pittsburgh a 21-17 win over Dallas for their second straight title.

After a Steelers drive stalled at the Cowboys 39-yard-line with 82 seconds left in the game, Dallas quarterback Roger Staubach drove the Cowboys into scoring position. Then Edwards intercepted Staubach's last-second pass to end Dallas' hopes.

In 1979, Terry Bradshaw passed a Super Bowl record four touchdown passes as Pittsburgh beat Dallas 35-31 to become the first team to win three Vince Lombardi trophies.

Staubach rallied the Cowboys with a pair of touchdowns in the final two and a half minutes, but a final onside kick attempt was recovered by the Steelers' Rocky Bleier.

Pittsburgh won their fourth Super Bowl the following year against the Los Angeles Rams. In those days, Steelers players sought "one for the thumb" — a fifth Super Bowl championship ring. Today's Steelers are starting their jewelry collections from scratch.

"The hell with one for the thumb," says Steelers quarterback Neil O'Donnell. "I want one for my finger."

Hughes to fire Welsh hopes

LONDON (AFP) — Chelsea veteran Mark Hughes returns to fire Welsh hopes in Italy on Wednesday after ending his rift with manager Bobby Gould which started when he snubbed November's European Championship trip to Albania.

Hughes and Gould fell out when the former Manchester United striker declined to travel to Tirana after being left out of the squad. Gould having decided to stick with the team narrowly defeated by Germany in October.

But following a face-to-face talk at the team's Rome hotel Monday, Hughes and Gould emerged to say they had patched up their differences.

Hughes, who will win his 59th cap against Arrigo Sacchi's men in Terni, was eager to brush aside any talk of him turning his back on his country.

"There's no way that I snubbed Wales. I never have done and I never will do," he declared.

"Until I am told differently I will always be available for selection and if people have got another impression they've been misled."

He explained: "I thought I was given the option of travelling to Albania."

Russia aim to upset U.S. Olympic supremacy

MOSCOW (AFP) — Despite the breaking of the Soviet Union, political instability and economic chaos, Russia's sport will still be a major force at the Atlanta Olympics.

At least that is the feeling one gets after talking to top Russian Olympic officials.

"Russia is still the only country in the world that can seriously challenge the hosts, the United States, for the overall supremacy in Atlanta," said Vitaly Smirnov, president of the Russian Olympic Committee last week.

In Smirnov's view whoever wins 36-37 gold medals, can claim the overall title.

"That is our medal plan for Atlanta," he said.

Smirnov said that the United States has many factors in its favour.

"The judges, the spectators, the climate in Atlanta, the fact they as host nation don't have to qualify for any events — all that and more makes the Americans the undisputed favourites," he conceded, adding defiantly: "But we'll put up a good fight."

Anatoly Kolesov, Smirnov's right-hand man and the chief of Russia's Atlanta preparation backed up his Olympic boss.

"Four countries — the United States, Russia, Germany and China — are clear favourites to lead the medal table. But only Russians and the Americans have enough resources to win first place."

said Kolesov, who won the gold at the 1964 Tokyo Games in Greco-Roman wrestling.

"Whether we can win will depend how much ground we'll lose to the Americans in track and swimming — their best events."

"On the other hand, the Russians are stronger in more than one sport."

Kolesov named such sports as Greco-Roman and free-style wrestling, weightlifting, skeet shooting, fencing, modern pentathlon, rhythmic and artistic gymnastics as events in which the Russians can be expected to do well.

Smirnov admitted that the Russians had lost their edge in many of the team sports, like handball, volleyball and basketball.

"Team sports are the glamour, most popular and therefore, most commercialised sports. Here, we are more vulnerable. We lost most of our players to the West, to foreign clubs, to big contracts," said Smirnov, explaining why Russia have qualified for Atlanta in only three team sports so far — water polo, men's handball and women's basketball.

"It is harder for us to qualify for the games than to compete in it," he said, adding: "As it is, we can't get our best players for qualifying tournaments, but in Atlanta we would have had the full squads."

Smirnov used men's basketball as an example.

Dalglish in running for Ireland post

BLACKBURN (AFP) — Blackburn director of football Kenny Dalglish will be one of four candidates to be interviewed for the vacant Republic of Ireland manager's, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) announced on Tuesday.

Millwall manager Mick McCarthy and Wimbledon boss Joe Kinnear have also been invited for interviews on Wednesday and Thursday along with Dave Rasset, who recently quit first division Sheffield United.

FAI president Louis Kilcoyne said: "There are no surprise names on the list, just the ones that have been speculated upon in the press."

Everton's Joe Royle and Leeds' Howard Wilkinson have both been linked with the vacancy, which follows Jack Charlton's resignation last month.

That would make former Liverpool and Celtic star Dalglish a clear favourite to succeed Charlton after earlier reports this week that he had declined to take part in any interview process.

Four members of the FAI's executive committee will conduct the interviews on their way back to Dublin, via London, from Liechtenstein, where fixtures for the Republic's 1998 World Cup qualifying programme were being drawn up today.



Charlotte Hornets forward Larry Johnson (left) tangles with Golden State Warriors centre Joe Smith during first half NBA action in the Charlotte Coliseum (Reuters photo)

Rockets, Spurs lose again

ATLANTA (R) — Steve Smith scored 26 points and Craig Ehlo had a season-high 25 to lead the Atlanta Hawks to a 105-96 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Clyde Drexler scored 23 points and Hakeem Olajuwon had 20 and nine boards for the Rockets, who have dropped three games in a row for the first time since the final three games of last season.

Mookie Blaylock chipped in 20 points, a season-high 10 rebounds, nine assists and six steals for Atlanta.

"It's like an old story,"

Drexler said. "Every time we got a rebound, they took it from us."

In Miami, Rex Chapman scored seven of his 25 points in a 17-2 run to close the game as the Miami Heat snapped a two-game losing streak with a 96-89 victory over the San Antonio Spurs.

Alonzo Mourning also had

25 points for the Heat, who won for just the second time in their last nine games.

"It's been like training camp the six weeks," Chapman said. "But all of my teammates have stayed with me."

In Milwaukee, rookie Bryant Reeves scored 22 points and Greg Anthony

and Blue Edwards had 18 apiece as the Vancouver Grizzlies snapped a 16-game road losing skid with a 100-92 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Milwaukee led 72-71 after three quarters before the Grizzlies made an 11-2 run to take an 86-78 lead with 6:50 remaining.

The four ex-bucks in Vancouver's lineup, Eric Murdock, Eric Mobley, Anthony Avent and Edwards combined to score 15 of the team's first 17 points of the period.

RESULTS

Atlanta	105	Houston	96
Miami	96	San Antonio	89
Vancouver	100	Milwaukee	92

'Peter Graf dodged tax on over \$28 million'

BONN (AFP) — Peter Graf dodged tax on more than 40 million marks (\$28 million) of earnings from his tennis champion daughter Steffi Graf, the magazine Der Spiegel reported on Monday.

This represents more than 21 million marks (\$14 million) of unpaid tax, the newspaper said.

Graf has been in jail on remand since August on suspicion of withholding information on his superstar daughter's earnings. At the time of his detention, he was charged with tax fraud on four million marks (\$2.75 million).

He faces up to nine years in jail if found guilty.

The newspaper cited a report issued December 15 by investigators saying the Grafs failed to declare 40.6 million marks in revenue.

It noted the Mannheim prosecutor had accused Peter Graf "of being driven by an above-average lust for gain."

It added that he had not been released on bail, as requested on several occasions by his lawyers, because he has refused to cooperate with investigators.

Der Spiegel also said Peter Graf obtained a letter from Hans-Wilhelm Gaeb, a former friend and supervisory board member of Opel, which legal authorities have described as a violation of the prison's mail screening system.

Opel was one of Steffi Graf's main sponsors.

The newspaper said that this letter proved "temporary detention has not stopped the champion's father from making contact with potential witnesses."

Worrying times for Monte Carlo Rally

MONTE CARLO (R) — The Monte Carlo Rally, definitely the oldest and arguably the most prestigious in the sport, is anxious about its future now that it no longer boasts automatic world championship status.

The leading works teams have shunned the winter classic, traditionally the first event of the season, to prepare for next month's Swedish Rally, which will mark the start of an odd-looking world series.

Under a controversial rule aimed at increasing manufacturer interest and cutting costs by pruning the calendar, a rotation system launched in 1994 throws several rallies out of the world championship every year.

Sweden, Australia and Spain went out the first year, followed in 1995 by Kenya's Safari Rally, Finland's 1000 Lakes and the San Remo Rally in Italy.

This year, the Monte, the season-ending RAC Rally

of Britain, the Tour of Corsica and the Portuguese Rally are all non-world championship. They will only count for a new formula for two-litre, non-turbo cars which draws little publicity.

"It's a pity because races such as the Monte Carlo, the tour of Corsica and the San Remo Rally have a history and an identity which must be preserved," said 1994 Monte winner Francois Delecour.

The Frenchman, campaigning a Peugeot 306 this week but switching to a factory Ford for the Swedish Rally, added: "I would have been very sad if I had not been able to come."

Monte Carlo official Rene Isoart said he had hoped that the reputation of the rally, first held in 1911 to attract tourists and gamblers to the Chic riviera resort and its casinos in the winter, would have been enough to guarantee the presence of the big teams.

"We were wrong," he said. "Toyota were preparing cars to come here at the time they were banned and if they had come, maybe others would have followed."

The Toyota Rally Team were banned for cheating in last October's Catalonia Rally, during a troubled 1995 season which also saw drivers complain about a new rule limiting technical assistance, leaving them to do some repairs themselves.

This year's Monte, in which German Armin Schwarz started hot favourite in a privately-entered Toyota, is being covered by fewer than 400 journalists, half the usual turnout.

"It's one of the most difficult rallies in the world and a big challenge for a driver," said Schwarz. "It's very popular in Germany and it makes a lot of sense for me to enter it."

Delecour and Schwarz

apart, the drivers who dominated the rally in recent years were all absent, including former world champion and three times winner Didier Auriol of France.

"The world championship starts in Sweden and we knew it," Auriol said. "But the Monte Carlo is a race I love, it's a myth, the roads are fantastic and, yes, I am disappointed not to be part of it."

Auriol, who won the world title in 1994 for Toyota, struggled to gain a drive following the disqualification of Toyota team Europe. He will drive a Subaru in Sweden but is still unsure of his fate for the rest of the season.

The Monte Carlo will regain world championship status next year only if organisers agree to comply with new regulations forcing them to run the race over no more than four days and to make it return to the same city every

night.

The governing FIA hope that the new format will make the races cheaper for the constructors and will ease television coverage.

But it would mean the end of the Monte's traditional preliminary stage, which sees the drivers start off from five European cities on the Saturday to reach Valence, in the Drome region, for the start of the first stage on the Monday.

Organisers would also have a drop some of the competitive section, which crosses the Ardeche and the Alps to end in Monte Carlo after the famous night finale in the mountains overlooking the principality.

"The preliminary stage may not be perfect for television but it's part of the race and it allows thousands of spectators to see it," Isoart said.

"It also seems difficult to have timed stages in

Ardeche and then return to Monte Carlo on the same day," he added. "But it's difficult for us to imagine the Monte Carlo without the Ardeche."

"We're asking ourselves questions about the future," Isoart added. "But there is a new orientation in rallying and I don't think we can resist it. The idea is to turn it into a show, like Formula One. The problem is that a rally is a road event and it's not as easy to organise as a Grand Prix."

Rallying is in a transitional phase which should end in 1998 with a new look world championship made up of shorter, tighter events, cheaper cars and, hopefully, more constructors.

"We're entering a new era," Auriol said. "We've got two more difficult years ahead of us but I'm optimistic. It will not be rallying like we used to know it. It will be something different."

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Late night storm delays No. 1 ranking verdict

Rubin ousts Sanchez in record marathon victory

MELBOURNE (AFP) — A late night storm here on Tuesday kept the tennis world waiting as to whether Andre Agassi would recapture the world NO. 1 ranking at the Australian Open.

Agassi, the defending champion, will become the new world No. 1 ranked player if he beats American compatriot Jim Courier in their interrupted quarter-final.

The keenly-awaited match didn't get underway until just before 11:00 p.m. (1200 GMT) on centre court after the record three hour 33-minute women's singles quarter-final between Chanda Rubin and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.

A brief thunderstorm, with heavy rain stopped play after 38 minutes when Agassi was serving at 4-5, 15-15 in the first set.

Groundstaff scurried to cover the hardcourt as the mechanical roof began its 20-minute closing operation.

Tournament director Paul McNamee announced that the Agassi-Courier match would be rescheduled as the third match on centre court Wednesday, resuming after the two women's quarter-finals.

Agassi's chance to leap to the head of the rankings came following incumbent Pete Sampras' sensational straight sets demise to Australian Mark Philippoussis in the third round.

No. 3 Thomas Muster was poised to make his challenge until he succumbed in the fourth round to Swede Mikael Tillstrom.

If Agassi loses to his long-time rival Courier, then Muster will become number one for the first time in his courageous career, which at one time was threatened by a severe knee injury as a result of a car accident in 1987. In this scenario Sampras, would be No. 2.

Adding spice to the situation is that Courier has won his last six matches with Agassi, in an overall 7-4



Spain's Arantxa Sanchez reacts to a line call during her defeat at the Australian Open (Reuters photo)



Croatia's Iva Majoli reacts during her quarter final match against world number one Monica Seles of the U.S. at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Monday (Reuters photo)

count stemming back to 1989. Agassi ended Sampras' 82-week reign as number one last April and was at the top of the rankings for 30 weeks before Sampras took over on Nov. 6 to finish the year ranked No. 1.

Earlier world number five Michael Chang breezed into his second successive Australian Open tennis semi-final with a straight sets annihilation of Muster's conqueror, unseeded Swede Mikael Tillstrom.

Tillstrom, ranked 105 and in the quarter-finals in his first Australian Open campaign, was easy met for the deadly-consistent Chang, who romped to a 6-0, 6-2, 6-4 victory in 76 minutes.

Chang, who bowed out to Sampras in last year's semi-finals here in four sets, will



Michael Chang of the U.S. hits a forehand shot during their quarter-final match at the Australian Open against Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom (Reuters photo)

face either Agassi or two-time winner Courier in a bid to go one step better this time.

In the most dramatic match of the tournament, young American Chanda Rubin won an heroic encounter with Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez Vicario which climaxed with a 30-game third set to claw her way into the semi-finals. The 19-year-old Rubin

meets world No. 1 Monica Seles in the semi-finals. The exhausted 13th seed took the three hour and 33 minute marathon, 6-4, 2-6, 16-14, the longest women's match at the Australian Open and also a record for the most games (48) and most games in a set (30) here.

The third seeded Sanchez Vicario was the beaten finalist here in 1993 and last year and also lost the 1995 finals at Roland Garros and Wimbledon.

Seles shrugged off a tendon injury to power into the semis

with a straight sets victory over Croatia's Iva Majoli. The Yugoslavian born American world No. 1, who dropped her opening service, swept back to win the quarter-final in 58 minutes 6-1, 6-2.

She said she had pulled a tendon above her right ankle. "The court is soft and my muscle is tight, and I pulled it. It's hard when you push off, but I was able to finish the match pretty strongly," she said.

Seles, playing her 13th Grand Slam quarter-final, was also recovering from a groin injury she suffered in the Sydney International in the leadup week to the Australian Open.

Champs glide into lead

SOFIA (R) — Olympic and world ice dance champions Oksana Griatchuk and Evgeny Platov took their expected lead at the European figure skating championships on Tuesday — and almost satisfied their coach in the process.

Their demanding trainer, former Olympic champion Natalia Linichuk, had slight reservations about her charges.

"They could have been freer and more relaxed, but overall I'm content," she said.

Krabbe heads back to court

MUNICH (R) — Former double world sprint champion Katrin Krabbe continues her campaign to get even with the athletics authorities who banned her for doping with another battle in the German civil courts this week.

Krabbe, who won the world 100 and 200 metres titles in 1991, will attempt to prove to a Munich court on Thursday that the German Athletics Federation (DLV) was acting illegally when it banned her for taking the banned substance clenbuterol in 1992.

Last May Krabbe, who has not competed since the ban, won another German court case to lift a two-year ban imposed by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) for the same offence.

If the blonde-haired sprinter, now married with a young baby, wins this week's case, she will be in a strong position to demand hefty compensation.

The DLV and IAAF were unable to impose the normal four-year ban for a doping offence because of a legal problem with the German federation's rule book.

Krabbe was therefore handed a one-year ban by the DLV for "unsportsmanlike conduct." In 1993 the IAAF decided to slap on an extra two years, ruling her out of last year's world championships.

German teammates Grit Breuer, a former world 400 metres silver medalist, and Manuela Derr, who were banned with Krabbe for taking the drug, have decided against contesting the case in the civil courts.

The two athletes made a return to the track at the end of last season and are training to compete at this year's Atlanta Olympics.

African Nations Cup

S. Africa poised for last 8

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies) — Ghana and Gabon, already through to the last eight of the African Nations Cup, are likely to be joined by South Africa from Group A and Algeria and Zambia from Group B after Wednesday's four games.

The other place in Group A is expected to provide a thrilling finish involving newcomers Angola and former winners Cameroon and Egypt.

South Africa are expected to rest several key players for their final group match against Egypt in Johannesburg, notably key midfielder Doctor Khumalo who is suffering from a toe injury.

The host nation would have to be beaten by five goals to be eliminated from the tournament but captain Neil Tovey said his team were keen "to send the Egyptians packing."

Egypt will be keeping an anxious ear open for the score of the other group match between Angola and Cameroon, which will be played simultaneously in Durban.

Angola, narrowly beaten in their first two matches, can still qualify for the quarter-finals if they beat Cameroon by two goals and Egypt suffer a similar defeat at the hands of South Africa.

But victory for Cameroon, who have shown great improvement since their 3-0 de-

feat by South Africa in the opening game last week, would almost certainly see them through.

Top seed Zambia and Algeria both need just one point from their last matches in Group B to qualify.

Zambia meet Sierra Leone, buoyant after their 5-1 win over Burkina Faso on Saturday.

Algeria take on Burkina Faso, who have fired their coach Indrissa Traore, with striker Kamel Kaci said back in the team after injury.

Burkina Faso will be without two key defenders, injured Camille Palenfo and Hassan Kamagate, suspended after being sent off in the previous match.

African Nations Cup diary
Two coaches sacked: Two coaches have lost their jobs at the African Nations' Soccer Cup.

Burkina Faso fired Indrissa Traore and Mozambique sacked Rui Cadador after their failures to win in their opening two matches at the tournament.

Traore, a popular figure in Burkina Faso after guiding the team to the finals, was fired for "poor results and bad team selection," said Burkina Faso Football Federation vice-chairman Alfred Sawadojo.

Burkina Faso have already been eliminated from the

tournament. Their losses included an embarrassing 5-1 defeat by Zambia in Bloemfontein on Saturday.

Traore will be replaced by assistant Calixte Zaire.

Portuguese-born Cadador, who took over as coach in October, was dismissed after Mozambique's 1-0 defeat by the Ivory Coast in Port Elizabeth on Saturday.

The loss left the team with just one point and they now need to beat favourites Ghana on Thursday to stand any chance of a quarter-final place.

Antonio Salvador will take charge of the team.

Injured Pele set to play: Ghana's Abedi Pele, injured by a two-footed tackle to the stomach against Tunisia, should be fit for their African Nations Cup Group D match against Mozambique here on Thursday.

Midfielder Pele, 31, whose challenge from keeper Chokri El Ouairi meant he could not return to Italy for Torino's league match on Sunday, is likely to be fit, coach Ismael Kurtz said at his hotel here on Tuesday.

Pele, a European Cup winner with Olympic Marseille, is set to train at the Free State Stadium here on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning before Brazilian Kurtz makes a final decision. "Pele should be fit to play," Kurtz confirmed on Tuesday.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMAR HIRSCH
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FIND THE SURE LINE

Both vulnerable, North deals.
NORTH
♠ Q 9 4
♥ A 10 8
♦ K 4
♣ A 5 2

WEST
♠ 7 3
♥ 5 4
♦ Q 8 3
♣ K 10 7 6 4

EAST
♠ J 10 2
♥ Q J 3 2
♦ 9 7 6 5 2
♣ 3

SOUTH
♠ A K 8 6 5
♥ K 9 7 6
♦ A 10
♣ Q J

The bidding: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1♣ Pass 1♠ Pass

Opening lead: Seven of ♠. Once they uncover a reasonable line, many declarers look no further into the position. As a result, a superior line often goes unnoticed.

North-South were playing that a new suit by responder is always forcing, hence South's bid of two hearts, which could be passed in standard methods. After North jump-raised spades, a cue-bidding sequence led to an excellent slam.

West led a club, run to declarer's

jack. The only problem on the hand was declarer's fourth heart, and most Souths would have been content to duck two rounds of trumps with the ace and queen, then play off the top of hearts. As long as the hand, short in hearts, also held only two trumps, declarer would be able to ruff a heart in dummy. That would succeed as the cards lay, but would fail on many other distributions.

Instead, thanks to the red-suit spot cards, declarer found a line that depended on no more than West having five clubs to be fool-proof, but still offering play if clubs were 4-4. Trumps were drawn in three rounds, the ace of clubs was cashed and a club ruffed.

Since East was now marked with only red cards, declarer led a heart and inserted dummy's eight. In with the jack, East was forced to give declarer an extra trick in whichever suit the defender chose to return, and the slam rolled home.

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Date: Friday, 26th January 1996

Place: Indian Embassy premises, 1st Circle, Jabal Amman, behind Malhas Hospital.

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Rabin's killer says he pulled trigger, but is not sorry

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — The Israeli accused of killing Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin admitted at the start of his trial on Tuesday that he pulled the trigger and said he was not sorry about it.

But defendant Yigal Amir denied the shooting was a premeditated murder, prompting a three-judge court to go ahead with his trial as planned in the heavily guarded Tel Aviv courtroom.

If premeditated, the Nov. 4 killing of Mr. Rabin carries a maximum life sentence. If not, the maximum punishment would be 20 years.

"My intention was to shoot him in such a way that would prevent him from serving as prime minister, either disabling him or if there was no choice — death," Amir told the court.

"My intention wasn't to cause his death. It wasn't premeditated. Otherwise I would have aimed at his head," Amir said, adding he fired the first of three shots at Mr. Rabin's spine.

Amir, a 25-year-old religious Jew opposed to Arab-Israeli peace moves, responded to the charge sheet point-by-point, as required by law, and then sat down. Moments later he asked to speak again, rose and told the judges: "I don't regret it."

From his statement, the court determined to proceed with the trial starting with prosecution witness Yoram Ben-Barush, the policeman who arrested Amir.

Amir said he acted alone even though prosecutors have in a separate proceeding charged Amir, his brother Hagai and a third man, Dror Adani, with conspiracy to assassinate Mr. Rabin. Yigal Amir alone is charged with the murder.

"On the evening of Nov. 4, I went with my gun — because I am always armed — to the Tel Aviv rally with the intention of preventing Yitzhak Rabin from pursuing his political activities," Amir told the panel.

"I fired the first bullet into his spinal column to wound him. I didn't see where the other two bullets went. I wasn't really aiming them," he said.

Amir said he "didn't have anything against Rabin personally," but added that he believed the prime minister "deserved the din rodef" — an element of ancient Jewish law permitting the murder of a person who puts the life of other Jews in danger.

"It wasn't a punishment, but an act of self-defence which was needed. I wanted to paralyse Rabin, but if I couldn't I wanted to kill him," he said.

Amir also confirmed that he had hatched several earlier plots to kill Mr. Rabin. "But I decided against it because they would have put innocent people in danger."

He also said that neither his brother Hagai nor Hadani was involved, although he admitted that Hagai provided him with the dum-dum bullets he used to shoot Mr. Rabin.

Hundreds of journalists and Amir's family crowded into the courtroom amid tight security for the trial.

Unlike during earlier court appearances when Amir sparked public outrage by calmly chewing gum and smiling at friends and rela-

tives, the defendant appeared serious and reserved at Tuesday's hearing.

The trial, which began on Dec. 19 but was quickly adjourned at the request of defence attorneys who wanted more time to prepare their case, resumed amid much confusion.

One of the Amir's two attorneys, Mordechai Ophir, arrived late and then openly disagreed with his partner, Jonathan Ray Goldberg, over how to proceed. They eventually requested a further trial delay, drawing a sharp rebuke from presiding Judge Edmond Levy.

"We demand answers to clear and simple questions which don't require the advice of medical or ballistic experts," Judge Levy told them.

"Yigal Amir must tell us if he was at King's Square in Tel Aviv on the evening of November 4 and if he shot at the prime minister," he said.

Amir then made his statement to the court without consulting his lawyers and Mr. Ophir immediately announced that he was quitting, but later changed his mind.

Mr. Ophir told AFP that the hearing that he disagreed with Mr. Goldberg's desire to build an ideological defence for Amir, saying he wanted to take a more legalistic approach.

"I disagree totally with my colleague and considered resigning, but I have to talk to my client and in any case my decision must be accepted by the court."

Mr. Levy ended Tuesday's session by telling Amir to decide before the resumption of hearings on Sunday who represent him.

Before the session ended, the judges also heard testimony from four security agents who had recorded Amir's initial confession of the murder, in which he defended the killing as "an act of divine justice" aimed at halting Mr. Rabin's policy of granting autonomy to Palestinians living in Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Nissim Daoudi, a police officer who was the second witness to testify, told the court: "He (Amir) was so sure of himself, so proud of the act that he had carried out that he simply told me in detail everything he had done over the last two years in preparing to kill the prime minister."

Police interrogators have said Amir stalked Rabin over many months and made several attempts on his life.

An amateur videotape showed him shooting Mr. Rabin from pointblank range as he left a peace rally at a Tel Aviv public square.

Judge Levy asked Amir: "Your confessions to these policemen, were they made under duress? Did they pressure you?"

"No, they were 100 per cent," Amir replied. "I volunteered my confession. I gave it from my own free will."

Defence attorneys declined to cross-examine either of the first two witnesses. Lawyer Goldberg said he had yet to receive all of the evidence and wanted to await the results of a state inquiry into security blunders that led to Mr. Rabin's assassination.



American soldiers walk through a field within a no-mans land between Bosnian government and Serb territories on Tuesday with special metal detectors to find anti-personnel mines (Reuters photo)

Samaritan takes seat in self-rule council

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A 73-year-old cantor for the tiny and ancient Samaritan community has launched a new career as a deputy to the new Palestinian self-rule council and says he will fully support President Yasser Arafat.

"Abu Ammar is my best friend," said Salom Omran Al Kahen, using Mr. Arafat's nom-de-guerre.

"He is excellent and loves the Samaritan community," said Omran, who is also known by his Hebrew name: Cohen Shalom Amram Yitzhak Hashomroni.

Mr. Omran was elected to the council seat reserved for the Samaritans, who trace their ancestry back to the ancient Israelites and live on a hillside above the West Bank city of Nablus.

As cantor, Mr. Omran leads the community in its prayers and blessings on the Mount Gerizim hillside it cherishes as the "sacred mountain."

The Samaritans in Nablus number only 300 souls but were guaranteed a place on the 88-member council representing more than 2.2 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Nablus Samaritans view the seat as a step in safeguarding their future under Mr. Arafat's Palestinian National Authority, which took control of the city during December after a 28-year Israeli military occupation.

Mr. Arafat, for his part, has sought to stake out a role as the protector of minorities in the Palestinian areas.

Palestinian Christians were also given seven reserved council seats.

"Preserving the community in its best fashion possible is one of the foremost matters for me," Mr. Omran said. He said he would be active in other issues as well but did not elaborate.

Another 300 Samaritans are Israeli citizens who live in the Tel Aviv suburb of Holon, and continued free access between the two communities is a major point of concern.

Bosnia pledges to release all Serb prisoners

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Bosnia's Muslim-led government promised to release more Serb prisoners of war on Tuesday after the United States threatened to block military and financial aid.

U.S. officials and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) peacekeepers are keen to complete the delayed release of all prisoners, which is a key element of the Bosnian peace accord.

The government has balked at meeting the demand until its Bosnian Serb foes provide information about thousands of Muslim men missing in Serb hands during the 3½-year war. Many are feared dead.

U.S. human rights envoy John Shattuck said after talks with President Alija Izetbegovic: "I was assured by the president that he will continue to release prisoners."

Mr. Izetbegovic's pledge of cooperation followed a warning by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher that the Sarajevo government could lose aid it needs to rebuild its army and repair war damage.

Although Washington has been the Bosnian Muslims' main ally in the West, and was responsible for the diplomatic drive that secured the peace agreement, Mr. Christopher said:

"We will not go forward with the equip-and-train unless they are in compliance with the agreement. They will not have a right to the reconstruction funds unless they are in compliance with the agreement."

U.S. military aid is important to the Bosnian government although it has also signed a deal with Turkey, another main backer, for the training of its armed forces.

NATO has only until the end of 1996 to implement the peace treaty before the planned withdrawal of American troops who comprise a third of the alliance's 60,000 peacekeeping force.

U.S. officials have sympathised with the Muslims' desire to establish what happened to those missing but NATO cannot afford to miss its tight programme of deadlines for the implementation of treaty decisions.

Mr. Shattuck said he had bluntly told President Izetbegovic that "all parties are now in default of releasing all prisoners, and that it is imperative that all prisoners be released."

A total of 217 prisoners were released Friday but at least 645 others remain in captivity, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The United States and the ICRC would create a working group to trace all missing persons, Mr. Shattuck added, a sop to the Sarajevo authorities who have linked compliance to information on the fate of thousands of missing civilians.

In the Hague, Christian Charter, spokesman for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICT), said tribunal officials would start "as soon as possible" exhuming bodies at a site in the Srebrenica area of eastern Bosnia visited Sunday by Mr. Shattuck.

The suspected mass grave "was explicitly mentioned in the charges laid on Nov. 16, 1992" against Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander, General Ratko Mladic.

War-crimes investigator Antonio Cassese was to visit Belgrade Tuesday in a move observers said would increase pressure on Belgrade to provide evidence against Mr. Karadzic and Gen. Mladic.

The pair were accused of genocide after Serb forces overran the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in July. Some 7,000 civilians have remained unaccounted for since then.

Mr. Shattuck, a witness Sunday to "very clear" evidence that massacres had been carried out in the region, said Monday he had seen "evidence of IFOR patrolling beginning in the general area, which I think is very important."

Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) commander Admiral Leighton Smith agreed to provide "appropriate" security for war-crimes investigators working in Bosnia, but stopped short of

changing the charter remains strong.

George Habash, a top Arafat rival and leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, has already rejected Israel's invitation to return to the territories for a PNC meeting.

"I reaffirm that I will not return as long as four-and-a-half million Palestinians are in exile and that others remain in Israeli jails," he said from his Damascus headquarters.

Even within the Palestinian territories some of the independents elected to the 88-seat self-rule council — all of whom automatically became PNC members — warn that Mr. Arafat is not guaranteed success on the charter issue.

"We have to replace the charter by a real constitution, and for that we have to wait until Palestinians have their state," said Hanan Ashrawi, elected to the council from East Jerusalem.

No 'secret' plan for refugees — Canada

BEIRUT (AFP) — A senior Canadian official on Tuesday ruled out any "secret plans" concerning the fate of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in the aftermath of a Middle East peace settlement.

Andrew Robinson, who heads Canada's Middle East peace process coordination bureau and chairs the working committee on Palestinian refugees in multilateral peace talks, made the comments after meeting Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Boutros.

"There are no hidden agendas and no secret plans," he said when asked about the possible resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in an era of peace in the Middle East.

"There is a process of bilateral negotiations and the objective of the multilateral talks is to support the bilateral negotiations and in the short term to address the humanitarian situation of the refugees."

Palestinian sources said Mr. Robinson would visit on Wednesday the 'Ain Al Hilweh camp in South Lebanon — the country's largest with a population of 70,000 people. Lebanon is home to 350,000 Palestinian refugees from the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, in 12 camps.

Lebanese officials have repeatedly ruled out the resettle-

ment of Palestinian refugees in the country, fearing it would jeopardise the fragile equilibrium between Lebanon's Christian and Muslim communities.

The new commissioner general of the U.N. Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA) in charge of Palestinian refugees, Peter Hansen, was also due in Lebanon later this week to tour the camps and get acquainted with the situation on the ground, the sources said.

Mr. Robinson reaffirmed the determination of the international community to continue giving "humanitarian" support to the refugees with the help of UNRWA and non-government organisations.

This support mainly consist in "reassuring the Palestinian refugees located outside the West Bank and Gaza that their situation remains very much of concern to the international community," Mr. Robinson said.

The multilateral talks cover refugees, disarmament, regional security, economic cooperation and water. The talks on refugees have not progressed beyond pledges of several tens of millions of dollars in contributions.

Israeli-Palestinian discussions on the final status of refugees are set to start in May.

Lebanon demands death for pro-Israeli chieftain

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese military authorities demanded the death penalty on Tuesday for the chief of Israel's proxy militia in South Lebanon on charges of collaborating with the enemy.

Military investigating Judge Riad Talee made the charges in an indictment against South Lebanon Army (SLA) chief Antoine Lahd, in the last legal step before the 67-year-old retired Lebanese army general is tried by military tribunal.

Political analysts in Beirut have said the move is a bid to preempt any discussion in peace negotiations of Israel's demands for safety guarantees for Mr. Lahd and integration of his 3,000-strong militia force into the Lebanese army.

Mr. Lahd, a Maronite Christian, has been commanding since 1985 the SLA which helps 1,000 Israeli troops patrol an anti-guerrilla buffer zone they occupy in South Lebanon. He has ignored an earlier order from Judge Talee to come in for questioning.

The indictment detailed the charges against Mr. Lahd as: forming a hostile army, carrying arms on Israel's side, helping Israel detach a strip of Lebanese territory by violence, forming an armed gang, killing or trying to kill Lebanese by artillery shelling, and kidnapping Lebanese citizens for long periods.

SLA detains 9

The SLA detained on Tuesday nine Lebanese villagers in the Jewish state's South Lebanon occupation

(Continued on page 7)

Ciller proposes a coalition formula

ANKARA (AFP) — Prime Minister Tansu Ciller Tuesday proposed a coalition government with the conservative Motherland Party on the principle of a rotating prime ministry.

Motherland leader Mesut Yilmaz told a televised joint news conference with Ms. Ciller that his party would evaluate the proposal in the coming days.

Ms. Ciller said after her meeting with Mr. Yilmaz that her True Path Party and the Motherland had a historic responsibility towards the Turkish people to set up a government.

This, she added, would keep "unwanted elements" out of the cabinet in a clear reference to the pro-Islamic Welfare Party which came first in general elections last month.

The Welfare Party, which is against closer Turkish ties with Europe and wants a stricter Islamic code, was unable to form a political partnership which would have allowed it to form a new government.

Ms. Ciller implied she should keep her post as prime minister in the first half of this legislative term, meaning for 2½ years, as "state affairs needed continuity."

Mr. Yilmaz said that

It also said that Mr. Lahd "defames the Lebanese state and attacks its officials in an illegal manner."

Lebanon and Israel are still in a state of war despite peace talks between them that began in 1991.

Mr. Lahd, who runs the SLA from the zone's biggest town Marjayoun, said last week he would ignore the capital charges brought against him by the Lebanese authorities.

He said he was confident Israel would protect him and obtain guarantees for himself and his militiamen when peace negotiations with Lebanon began.

Mr. Lahd and Israeli leaders have repeatedly said any settlement with Lebanon must include guarantees for the safety of him and his men and have proposed that some of the mixed Christian-Shiite Muslim force should be drafted into the Lebanese army.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said no real peace negotiations would take place with Beirut until it stopped harassing the SLA and restrained Hizbollah whose guerrillas often attack the border zone.

SLA detains 9

The SLA detained on Tuesday nine Lebanese villagers in the Jewish state's South Lebanon occupation

(Continued on page 7)

Unknown rock group sets new British record

LONDON (R) — Babylon Zoo, a rock group led by a singer who is half Asian and half native American, knocked George Michael off the number one spot Monday by producing the fastest selling debut single in British pop history.

Babylon Zoo's song Space-man, featuring heavy metal guitar and synthesised vocals, sold more than 500,000 copies in its first week of release, prompting comparisons to rock legends such as David Bowie and the Beatles.

Superman actor discharged from hospital

NEW YORK (R) — Paralyzed Superman actor Christopher Reeve left Northern Westchester Hospital Centre Monday after a week of hospital treatment for two infections, erratic blood pressure and constipation, hospital officials said.

The Mt. Kisco, New York, hospital said it had cleared up the infections, which had caused a condition known as autonomic dysreflexia, which results in swings in blood pressure and, if not treated, can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Lapidus trades needle for glue

PARIS (R) — Olivier Lapidus, fashion's technological wizard, traded in his needle for a pot of glue, sending out a spring-summer haute couture collection which looked all paste and no stitch. With a newly invented machine patented last August, Lapidus said that clothes could now be sewn together with neither needle nor thread, but just a spot of glue, which the designer claims is less weighty. He pioneered the new technique with "collage" clothing in the spirit of artists Matisse, Picasso and Juan Gris.

Fergie's reputed rescuer a quiet tycoon

NEW YORK (R) — A New Jersey businessman who is reported to have brokered a deal for Britain's Duchess of York to pay off her debts is a reclusive, self-made tycoon known for his philanthropic work, associates said. The duchess is getting funding from a U.S. children's educational and television programme. British newspapers have reported the deal was engineered by Raymond Chambers, a corporate raider who left the business world in 1986 to devote himself to charity. According to reports, the duchess signed a deal with U.S. Executives, led by Mr. Chambers, for the rights to earnings from her Budgie The Helicopter children's book.

Madonna puts on serious show about Evita

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Madonna, in Argentina to film Alan Parker's Evita, is doing her best to persuade the country she will not cheapen the hallowed memory of Eva Peron, but a television poll showed she is still unwelcome. Madonna spent the week-end meeting Peronist historians and former party officials and ignoring the young fans mounting a screaming vigil outside her hotel. But an unscientific phone poll by state channel ATC showed that only 237 of those asked supported Madonna playing Evita, while nearly twice that many opposed Parker's choice of the provocative U.S. pop singer to star in his \$60 million movie.

Amending PLO charter is only a symbolic step

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Cancellation of clauses in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) charter calling for Israel's destruction is of capital importance for Palestinians and Jews alike, even though the document retains little more than symbolic importance.

Israel has warned it will halt the peace process crowned by last week's historic Palestinian elections unless the clauses are scrapped in coming weeks.

But many Palestinians, especially refugees living in exile, fear that such an amendment to the PLO charter will mean the death knell for their demand for the right to return to their homes.

"This is not a fundamental issue, but rather a symbolic one," said the former justice minister in Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Freih Abu Middein.

"There are no Palestinians

left who are calling for the destruction of Israel," he said.

But for Israelis, the 1968 charter remains a symbol of their fears for the very survival of the Jewish state.

"You cannot be both for peace and for war," Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said recently in a warning to Mr. Arafat that the PLO charter must be altered within two months of the inaugural session of the Palestinian council elected on Saturday.

The PLO charter, which states that the creation of Israel "has no validity" is already, de facto, a dead letter.

The Palestinian National Council (PNC) — the PLO parliament-in-exile — already acknowledged this in 1988. Mr. Arafat himself called the offending clauses "null and void" in 1989, and the PLO has signed five separate peace accords with the Jewish state since 1993.

But the controversy continues, notably fueled by domestic considerations inside the two camps.

In Israel, abolition of the statutes would help Mr. Peres and his Labour Party silence the main argument put forward by the political and religious right in condemning the Palestinian autonomy agreement: Israel cannot trust Mr. Arafat because the PLO remains committed to its destruction.

Once the controversial passages in the charter are removed, "the right will have to find a more valid argument," Mr. Peres says.

To help Mr. Arafat get the two-thirds majority the PNC needed to amend the charter, Mr. Peres on Saturday authorised all the parliament's 630 members — most of whom live in exile — to enter the Palestinian territories for a meeting.

For the Palestinians, removal of the charter's refer-

ences to Israel would underscore Mr. Arafat's continuing mastery over the PNC, the only body representing the whole Palestinian nation, in the territories and abroad.

Mr. Arafat personally promised the late prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, that he would amend the charter.

But he could drag out the process in hopes of wringing a few more concessions from the Israelis in upcoming negotiations on the future of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and the creation of a Palestinian state.

Mr. Arafat's ability to act, has been strengthened greatly by his domination of Saturday's election, in which his supporters won more than 75 per cent of the council seats and he personally trounced his only rival for the post of president — Samiha Khalil, an opponent of changing the charter.

Among exiled PLO leaders, however, opposition to

changing the charter remains strong.

George Habash, a top Arafat rival and leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, has already rejected Israel's invitation to return to the territories for a PNC meeting.

"I reaffirm that I will not return as long as four-and-a-half million Palestinians are in exile and that others remain in Israeli jails," he said from his Damascus headquarters.

Even within the Palestinian territories some of the independents elected to the 88-seat self-rule council — all of whom automatically became PNC members — warn that Mr. Arafat is not guaranteed success on the charter issue.

"We have to replace the charter by a real constitution, and for that we have to wait until Palestinians have their state," said Hanan Ashrawi, elected to the council from East Jerusalem.

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